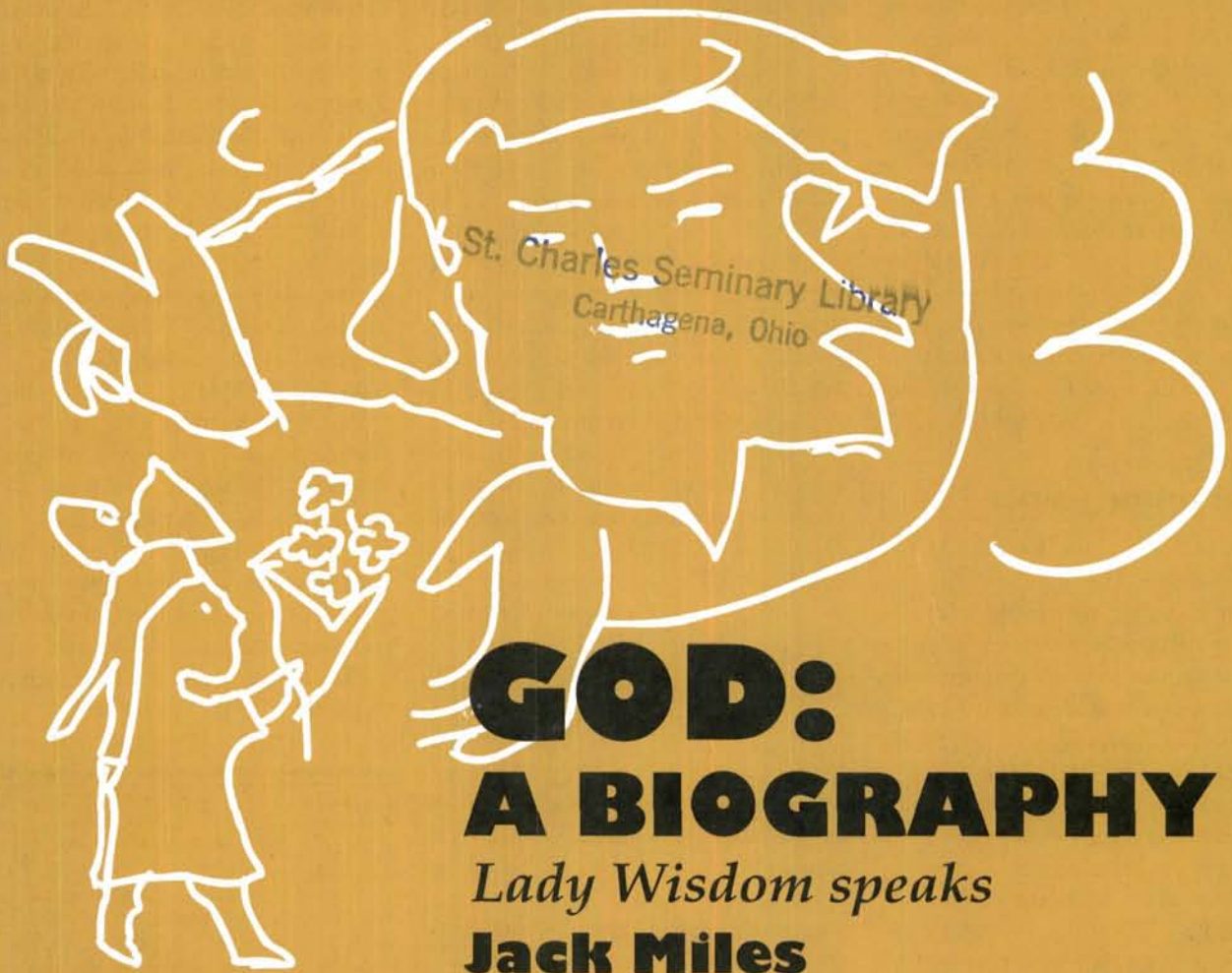
COMMONWEAL

$2.00 March 10, 1995

RELIGIOUS BOOK ISSUE



St. Charles Seminary Library
Carthagena, Ohio

GOD: A BIOGRAPHY

Lady Wisdom speaks

Jack Miles

DENNIS M. DOYLE on Schüssler Fiorenza's Christology

DENNIS O'BRIEN on Paul E. Dinter's 'Beyond Naive Belief'

MARY DOUGLAS on 'The Hungry Soul' by Leon R. Kass

ANNA HARRISON on Paul Elie's 'Tremor of Bliss'

MARTIN E. MARTY on Mormon cosmology

Report on MEXICO: George W. Grayson

o McMannus

n Peggy Noonan

wns 'King George'

05
0 74470 81397 2
**********3-DIGIT 458
CW 00079972 9601
ST CHARLES LIBRARY
ST CHARLES SEMINARY
2860 US ROUTE 127
CARTHAGENA OH 45822-9591
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CORRESPONDENCE

NRLC unheard

Lawrence, Mass.

To the Editors: Dr. Jim Hood's criticism [Correspondence, February 10] of the National Right to Life Committee's response to violence does not square with the facts. The NRLC has consistently, forcefully, and articulately denounced all violence against the abortion industry and its workers. Articles by David Andrusko, Wanda Franz, and Michele Arocha Allen in the January issue of *NRL News* are recent examples of this long-standing position. Criticism would be better directed at the news media, which have failed to report the NRLC's position accurately and prominently. JAMES D. O'CONNOR

Astounding views

Pacific Grove, Calif.

To the Editors: The opinions expressed in your issue on eucharistic presence [January 27] are astounding. Have we become a people with a "there-may-be-something-in-it" attitude toward the words of Jesus? The figures given on beliefs, and the quibblings on transubstantiation as something that "cannot guide us" suggest such a debacle.

What of the Irishman who, on learning that some people doubted the host as the body and blood of Jesus, said after a moment's thought, "But what else would it be?" What indeed? Hocus-pocus? We should be ashamed. JANE WILGRESS

No time for reflection

Wausau, Wis.

To the Editors: The post-Vatican II theologically correct emphasis on community has been a major factor in the apparent decline of belief in the real presence in the eucharistic celebration.

Regardless of that theology, union with God through the body and blood of Christ is a very personal act, requiring quiet contemplation to grasp and hold the full meaning of union with God. But the liturgy does not permit any space or quiet time for such contemplation. Moreover, the feeling of community is often forced, because the eucharistic presence is not felt by the individual members. For many, this loss has turned the Mass into a symbolic ritual.

Soon after the Vatican II liturgical changes, my pastor wanted communicants to receive in groups standing in a semi-circle before the altar; he felt this would encourage a stronger sense of community. He was correct: We received as individuals but within a group, preserving personal union while emphasizing reception as a community (much more effective than single-file lines). Unfortunately his views did not prevail; his method took too much time.

Perhaps it is time for a poet/dramatist working with theologians to rework the eucharistic celebration to bring a personal sense of the Real Presence back to the Mass and create a real sense of community. MARILYN KRAMER

Understanding Eucharist

Yonkers, N.Y.

To the Editors: In his thoughtful appeal for a new synthesis of eucharistic theology ["Who Is at the Table?" January 27], Nathan Mitchell seeks to redress an imbalance and to promote the active participation of the believing community in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Yet his article, in providing a needed rectification, can also contribute to a new one-sidedness. This appears, for example, in his formulation of "the basic eucharistic question": "not who is *on* the table but who is *at* the table, and how did we get there?" It also appears in the implied contrast between a "Christological" understanding of the eucharistic mystery and an "ecclesiological" one.

One is prompted to ask: Can there be a faithful understanding of eucharistic mystery and presence whose heart is not Christological? For *whose* body and blood do we, the church, receive? *Who* is the living Lord of the community in whose presence we gather, are nourished, and sent forth?

The issue, then, is not to contrast "Christological" and "ecclesiological," but, rather, to foster a less constricted ecclesiology, one that appreciates the differentiated role of the entire body of Christ in eucharistic celebration. I certainly concur with Mitchell in desiring a more ample sense of the whole Christ, head and members. But I resist any declension that tends to absorb the head into the members; any suggestion that the Resurrection of Jesus is adequately exegeted by the claim that he rose "a people." Surely a truly comprehensive vision contemplates *both* who is on the table *and* who is at the table.

One needs to utter a like caution regarding Mitchell's recourse to Rahner's "liturgy of the world." For it can all too easily evaporate into rhetorical sentimentality, unless grounded in the liturgy of word and sacrament that alone provides the *substance* of things hoped for. Intimations of presence indeed abound to eyes sharpened by faith in Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Real Presence. But Rahner-inspired

(Continued on page 27)

Commonweal is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest and Book Review Index. Microfilm from Vol. 1, 1924, to current issues available through University Microfilm, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and on Microfiche from Bell & Howell, Wooster, Ohio 44691. *Commonweal* articles also are available at many libraries and research facilities on CD-ROM and in electronic data bases. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional offices. Copyright © 1995 Commonweal Foundation. Single Copy, $2. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $39; Canada, $41; foreign, $44. Special two-year rate: U.S. $67; Canada, $71; foreign, $77. Surcharge for air mail delivery to Europe, North Africa, Central or South America, $35 per year; for other parts of the world, $44 per year. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank.

Illustrations: Cover art, Charlot, cover design, Antonucci; pp. 4, 21, 22, Baloo, Rothco; p. 9, Matt, Rothco; p. 16, Schwadron, Rothco; p. 18, Punch, Rothco; p. 26, Ross, Rothco; p. 30, Paul Valerry.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMONWEAL

CONTENTS

Volume CXXII, Number 5

Correspondence: 2
Editorial: 3
Follow that peso: *George W. Grayson* 4
But the 'Indios' remember: *Alberto Huerta* 5
Fallout from pedophilia: *E. Leo McMannus* 6
The art of disagreeing: *J. Bryan Hehir* 7
A literary reading of the Book of Proverbs: *Jack Miles* 9
Screen: *Richard Alleva* 15
Media: *Frank McConnell* 16

BOOKS

Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet, by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza: *Dennis M. Doyle* 18
Beyond Naive Belief, by Paul E. Dinter: *Dennis O'Brien* 20
The Hungry Soul, by Leon R. Kass: *Mary Douglas* 22
A Tremor of Bliss, edited by Paul Elie: *Anna Harrison* 24
The Refiner's Fire, by John L. Brooke: *Martin E. Marty* 26
Poking around: The how & the why: *Kathleen Dean Moore* 30

STAFF

Editor: Margaret O'Brien Steinfels
Managing Editor: Patrick Jordan
Associate Editor: Paul Baumann
Production Editor: Jacqueline Dowdell
Senior Writer: Robert G. Hoyt
Business Manager: Richard Haas
Poetry: Rosemary Deen
Screen: Richard Alleva
Columnists: John Garvey, J. Bryan Hehir, Abigail McCarthy, David R. Carlin, Jr., Sidney Callahan, Liz Leibold McCloskey, Edward McGlynn Gaffney, Jr.
Staff: Harriette Balsky, Carmen P. Alava, Sandra Smith
Advertising Manager: Ruth E. Taylor
Publisher: Edward S. Skillin

Commonwealth, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly except Christmas/New Year's; and monthly July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 15 Dutch St., New York, N.Y. 10038. Telephone: (212) 732-0800. Display advertising correspondence should be sent to Ruth E. Taylor, 11 Graffam Rd., So. Portland, Me. 04106 (207) 799-4387, classified advertising correspondence to 15 Dutch St. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Commonweal, 15 Dutch St. New York, N.Y. 10038.

Commonweal welcomes letters on subjects treated in its pages. Letters of not more than 250 or 300 words naturally have a better chance of being published.

Contract hits home

When a large institution or government restructures to address the seemingly insurmountable new situations confronting it, its first attempt at reform is invariably a patch-up job. But, Peter Drucker writes in the February *Atlantic*, if the situation is grave enough—and he implies that the U.S. government is in such a predicament today—simply patching will fail every time.

Then follows a second phase: the frenzy to slash or downsize. That, says Drucker, is what the Republican majorities are about today. When Massachusetts Governor William Weld signed his state's tough new welfare law last month, he almost chortled that "we are obliterating today the mistakes of welfare as it has existed for decades." Yet, Drucker warns, downsizing of itself won't succeed in reshaping the institution in question. In fact, it can be a dangerous mistake: Amputation before diagnosis results in fatalities.

Drucker insists, however, that troubled institutions can successfully reshape themselves if they first clarify their purpose and devise the means for achieving it. For example, the best way for a corporation to get control of its costs is not to begin by reducing its expenditures but by identifying its most productive activities. If the corporation is to survive, it is these activities that must be strengthened, promoted, and expanded.

We are now more than fifty days into the diluvian 104th Congress, the Congress of the long knives, or what the *Wall Street Journal* calls "the New Deal and the Great Society in Reverse." The scope of legislation considered so far has been dizzying: the balanced-budget amendment, line-item veto, tort reform, curtailment of Congress's taxing powers, slashing welfare, relinquishing federal oversight, and restricting the executive branch in foreign affairs. But for all the sound and fury, the 104th's proposed adjustments to what ails the republic represent little more than Drucker's second, self-defeating phase. Instead of reappraising the functions and the means of enhancing democratic governance for the common good, the mighty 104th has settled for downsizing.

Take the mantra on taxes. Although total federal receipts as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product are no higher than they were in 1954 (*see* Herbert Stein, the *New Republic*, January 23), the new Congress has put a priority on cutting taxes, particularly for the wealthy through lower capital gains taxes and more generous depreciation allowances. But nowhere has the 104th and its Contract with America determined how much these proposals will translate into lost revenue. E.J. Dionne, Jr. (*Washington Post*, February 7), estimates that this "tax-cut extravaganza" could cost the treasury $200 billion in the first five years and $500 billion in the next five. This is "déjà voodoo" economics. As Republican Congressman Sherwood Boehlert (N.Y.) courageously declared, "It's sheer lunacy to be focusing on tax

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

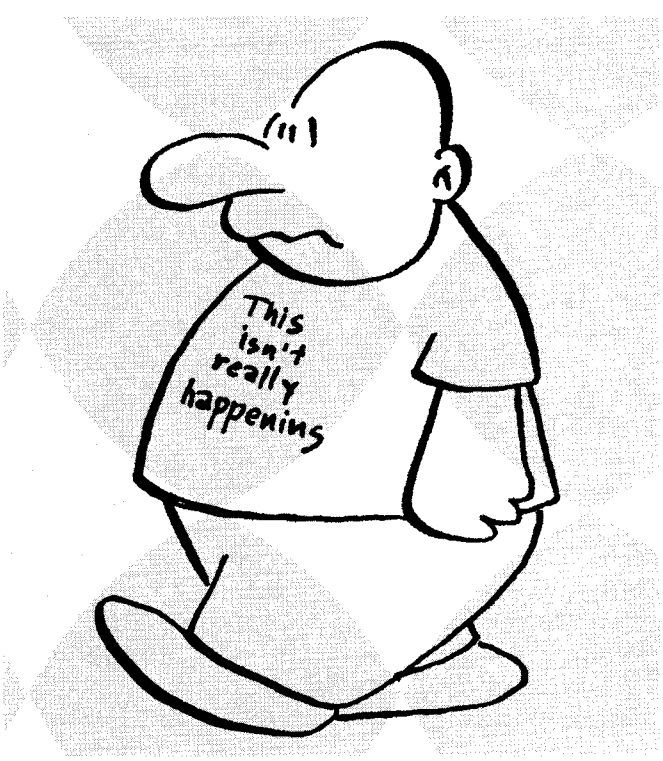
cuts before we complete budget cutting."

One might argue that the contract's balanced-budget amendment—certainly the most constitutionally dubious Republican proposal—fits Drucker's third step, and that it would force profound structural changes on how the republic does its business. There can be little doubt that such an amendment would have a revolutionary effect, but not even the contract's most ardent proponents have been willing to spell out the details. Robert L. Livingston (R-La.), chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, did hint recently only that the cuts will be "monumental."

There is something of a precedent, however. A similar experiment in reforming government through the back door was undertaken by frustrated California voters in 1978 with Proposition 13. It mandated super majorities to approve tax raises. Now, after recurring municipal crises in school funding, basic services, and even police protection, Proposition 13 is increasingly seen as a debacle, straitjacketing the state. Some local governments, unable to drum up sufficient operating revenue from balking voters, turned to risky investment strategies. Last year, caught in a crossover of interest rates, the wealthy district of Orange County suffered a series of huge losses in its investment portfolio and was forced to declare bankruptcy.

While some Orange County conservatives have taken the county's default as a golden opportunity to cut government even more, there is another lesson that can be drawn from this sad chapter: Ill-conceived legislation can lead not only to "smaller government" but to the useless destruction of valuable and necessary public institutions.

To date, the 104th Congress has equated constriction with reform. But "revolutionary glee" and budgetary knife-wielding are no substitute for real progress.



REPORT ON MEXICO

FOLLOW THAT PESO

ZEDILLO & CHIAPAS

As the world knows, the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) has laid claim to a slice of Mexico's impoverished Chiapas state. They have pledged to fight for the underdog Mayan population in its struggle against what they perceive to be a repressive oligarchy in Mexico City, now selling their country to the *gringos*. The continuing crisis in Chiapas has come to symbolize Mexico's larger economic and political problems.

As it happens, approximately six years ago, Mexico's then-chief executive Carlos Salinas faced a problem remarkably similar to the one that now confronts recently elected President Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León in Chiapas. When Salinas took office, a powerful band of corrupt oil-union thugs had sought to intimidate the reformist Salinas administration. Salinas's bold response to the conniving *petroleros*—he dispatched troops to arrest the wrongdoers just two months after taking office—endowed the president with an *hombre fuerte* or strong-man image. His standing in public-opinion surveys improved dramatically and paved the way for implementing one dramatic reform after another.

Mexico's new president, reeling from a recent 40-percent devaluation of the peso, has borrowed a page from Salinas's book. In a February address to the nation, the president reviewed his repeated efforts to settle the fourteen-month-long Chiapas dispute through negotiation and dialogue, including an early February appeal for the EZLN "to openly, explicitly, and decidedly raise their demands through political channels." These entreaties were rewarded, Zedillo said, by the rebels' stocking clandestine safe-houses in Mexico City and Veracruz state with weapons. Meanwhile, he advanced evidence that EZLN leaders were "neither popular, nor indigenous, nor from Chiapas," but the offshoot of the Forces of National Liberation, a violent movement that dates to the late 1960s.

In view of the alleged security threat, Zedillo ordered Attorney General Antonio Lozano Gracia, a member of the opposition National Action Party (PAN), to track down and arrest the top five EZLN operatives. Heavily armed government troops swept into Chiapas, reportedly seizing the guerrillas' Lacandón forest headquarters without firing a shot. However, Zapatista leader Subcomandante Marcos—the ski-masked, bandolier-wearing rebel chieftain, whom magazines ranging from the *New Yorker* to *Vanity Fair* have depicted as a Spanish-speaking Scarlet Pimpernel—remains at large. He has been identified as Rafael Sebastián Guillén Vicente, thirty-seven, a Jesuit-trained, prize-winning sociology student from Tampico, a Gulf Coast port.

The EZLN has a small circle of leaders, and the recent ar-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rests delivered a thumping body blow to the organization. Still, Marcos/Guillén, or whatever his name, is the Zapatistas' big enchilada. Putting him away quickly could burnish Zedillo's badly tarnished image, which suffered another setback in mid-February when the right-wing PAN candidate trounced his ruling party opponent for the governorship of Jalisco state. The reason is simple. Mexicans expect their leaders to act decisively. But since taking office in December, Zedillo has seemed the ineffective prisoner rather than the articulate master of events. He remained missing-in-action as Finance Minister Jaime Serra Puche bungled the Christmas-time peso devaluation, emerging only to fire his long-time confidant in late December. Next, he looked on as Serra Puche's replacement, Guillermo Ortíz Martínez, sought to propitiate bankers and investors. Then, he stayed largely on the sidelines while Bill Clinton dominated Mexico City headlines—first, for battling the U.S. Congress on behalf of a $40-billion stabilization scheme; then, in bypassing American lawmakers to craft a $50-billion bailout in concert with the International Monetary Fund, the Bank of International Settlements, and other financial institutions.

Columnists in local newspapers—from the highly respected *Reforma* to the tendentious *Unomásuno*—have literally shouted the question: "Who's running the Mexican government?" By contrast, Salinas often exercised executive power without respecting the law, the constitution, or other branches of government. For example, he steamrolled legislation and constitutional amendments through a pliant Congress dominated by his ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). He also removed from office the governors of half the country's thirty-one states, often because they had embarrassed his administration. In addition, he worked ceaselessly to undermine the balkanized, leftist-nationalist Democratic Revolutionary Party, while boosting the stock of the center-right PAN. And he disdained primary elections to select PRI candidates in favor of hand-picking nominees in a procedure called the *dedazo* of which Zedillo is a beneficiary.

Ironically, Salinas-impelled reforms have made it more difficult for the politically inexperienced Zedillo to emulate his predecessor's decisive actions. First, opposition-party control of at least one-quarter of the expanded, 128-seat Senate provides an important tribune for critics of presidential initiatives. Second, the economic liberalization highlighted by NAFTA has undercut key interest groups—trade unions, peasant organization, and government workers—that form an integral part of the once-cohesive PRI political machine. Many PRI leaders, especially old-guard "dinosaurs," deplore the effort by Zedillo, a convinced democrat, to distance the presidency from his own party. Third, the sharp reduction in import permits and other regulatory devices in an ever-freer market obviates the need for so many patronage jobs, while reducing a source of boodle

But the 'Indios' remember

Mexicans, divided about President Ernesto Zedillo's military actions in Chiapas, were temporarily relieved when he called for a cease fire. If Zedillo had hoped to upgrade his image as a tough president by ordering the arrest of the Zapatista leaders, the cease fire put him in a quandary: How likely were the fugitives to negotiate when there were outstanding warrants for their arrest? Purportedly, Zedillo agreed to an amnesty plan that included the Zapatista leaders. But the pelting by 500 PRI landowners of the cathedral of San Cristóbal de las Casas as the police stood by for two hours made Zedillo appear insincere.

The Zapatistas, deep in the Lancandón jungle, were not taking any chances with Zedillo's flip-flops. *Indios* have long memories and expressed suspicion and fear of walking into a legal and political ambush. As one Zapatista said: "Don't forget April 10, 1919, and the trap...laid for Emiliano Zapata." The populist revolutionary hero was shot by government troops during peace negotiations. Today's Zapatistas will scrutinize whatever offer the government makes. For now, they want the army to leave the jungle as a good faith gesture in the peace process, something the army has not done.

Zedillo must also decide about the call of the former governor of Chiapas, Eduardo Robledo Rincón, for the resignation of Bishop Samuel Ruiz García of San Cristóbal de las Casas. Bishop Ruiz, the Zapatista mediator and *Tatic*—Father—to the Maya, has refused to resign, and has five years before mandatory retirement. Those close to Ruiz said Robledo's action was an orchestrated strategy by Zedillo to remove "the meddlesome and maverick bishop."

Some Mexicans are angered and most are skeptical. The governing party's Ivy-League-educated brain trust delayed information about Mexico's economic situation until after the August elections, devalued the peso in December, and then blamed the Chiapas uprising for the peso's fall. Nor are Mexicans happy with the implications of the $50-billion bailout, including the increase in interest rates. Since Mexico's oil was nationalized in 1938, it has been jealously protected as a national treasure. Mexico must now put up as yearly collateral $6-billion worth of its nationalized oil, some of it from Chiapas, for U.S. and foreign investors. But many Mexicans, including the Maya in Chiapas, see this as a flashback to the days of Porfirio Díaz (1830–1915), the dictator who practically gave the country's natural resources to foreign interests and was a cause of the 1910 revolution and Zapata's insurgency.

ALBERTO HUERTA

Alberto Huerta, S.J., is an associate professor in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages at the University of San Francisco.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with which to grease the PRI's sixty-six-year-old patronage network. Fourth, the creation of an independent central bank, though not as autonomous as the U.S. Federal Reserve, severely limits presidential control over monetary policy.

Finally, some 80 percent of Mexican firms—representing 40 percent of production—have failed to adapt to NAFTA-inspired competition and may close down. Contracting rather than expanding employment in a nation whose population yields 1.2 million new job-seekers each year means that a mounting number of Mexicans will seek illegal entry into Texas and California.

Smashing the Zapatistas could lift the hugely unpopular Zedillo's standing at home. A successful anti-insurgent campaign would also win praise on Wall Street where twenty-something money-managers—distraught by the peso debacle—have made the Chiapas situation a crucial litmus text of Mexican stability.

But Zedillo must not let the antiguerrilla effort distract him from putting Mexico's economic house in order. As a Yale-educated economist, he knows how difficult it will be to implement the provisions of the February rescue-package. Painful as it may be in the weeks ahead, he should spearhead a short, sharp shock rather than risk a prolonged recession and protracted inflation. Failure to slash government spending and exercise rigorous monetary discipline now will mean that in a few months, whatever the outcome of a "let's-track-down-Subcomandante Marcos" crusade, international bankers will call Mexico on the carpet for failing to fulfill its promises. When that happens, Washington will have no more white rabbits to pull out of the hat. At the same time, GOP presidential candidates will bash Mexico across the head and shoulders as they seek to discredit the economic policies of both Clinton and Zedillo.

GEORGE W. GRAYSON

George W. Grayson, who teaches government at the College of William and Mary, has just written The North American Free Trade Agreement: Regional Community and the New World Order, *published by the University Press of America.*

REPORT ON IRELAND

FALLOUT FROM PEDOPHILIA

THE DOMINOES KEEP TUMBLING

Just a few miles up the pot-holed road from Mount Nugent, a quiet village near Ireland's lovely Lough Sheelin, is Holy Trinity Abbey, home of the Norbertine religious community, in Kilnacrott, County Cavan. Going up the hill to the abbey is like ascending the mythical mountain. The abbey, though, despite its peaceful and pastoral setting, is not tranquil these days. Last June, one of its priests, Father Brendan Smyth, sixty-seven—who had voluntarily surrendered to civil authorities in Northern Ireland on a charge of child molestation—was tried and convicted, and began serving a four-year prison sentence in Magilligan prison in County Derry.

A few months later, in October, after details of the "pedophile priest" became known in the media, Father Kevin Smith, the abbot since 1969, resigned, admitting "many errors" in having transferred Smyth from parish to parish, from country to country—a trail that included assignments in Scotland and Wales, North Dakota and Rhode Island in the United States, and Northern Ireland and the Republic—in an attempt to stop his sexual abuse of children. This abuse apparently was not unkown to his superiors.

Such moving from place to place, and covering-up the violations, was the way the problem used to be handled, the former abbot explained. "In those years," he ruefully confessed, "frequent reassignment was often the way church authorities handled priest pedophiles and other problem priests....We now see how inadequate this approach actually was."

The behavior of Father Smyth, a member of the Norbertine community since 1945 and a Norbertine priest since 1951, "perplexed and troubled our community over many years," according to a statement to the media by the former abbot. "We always hoped that a combination of treatment, Father Smyth's intelligence, and the grace of God would enable Father Smyth to overcome the compulsive nature of his disorder."

The abbot's resignation was something of a reprise, on a smaller scale, of course, of the 1990 resignation of the archbishop of Saint John's, Newfoundland, Alphonsus L. Penney. The commission that he had appointed to investigate charges of clerical abuse, in its final report, faulted him for failing to act. In shame, he resigned. "We are a sinful church," the penitent archbishop candidly admitted. "We are naked. Our anger, our pain, our anguish, our shame, are clear to the whole world."

In Ireland, not only did the abbot resign but, the following month, Prime Minister Albert Reynolds as well, himself a victim of the awesome ramifications of this child molestation case. His resignation was precipitated by the Labor party's withdrawal of support of the coalition government, already beginning to disintegrate as the result of two previous political scandals, this time on the charge that Reynolds's former attorney general, Harry Whelehan, had outrageously neglected to act upon nine Northern Ireland warrants for the extradition of Father Smyth. Furthermore, Reynolds had lost support when, in the absence of half his Cabinet and the Labor party membership, he nominated Whelehan to presidency of the High Court. There he was beyond the power of Parliament (Dail Eireann) to question him. After only two days in his new post, however, Whelehan himself resigned. It was the day after Reynolds admitted that his former attorney general was to blame for the failure to extradite Smyth.

At Maynooth, where the Irish bishops had gathered for their fall meeting, they offered an "unreserved" apology to the victims of clergy abuse, and to their families. Without referring specifically to the "pedophile priest" case, already the subject of searing scrutiny in the media, they acknowledged "past mistakes." "We fully accept our obligations in regard to the civil law and the need to cooperate with the civil authorities which

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have responsibilities for the investigation and the identification of child sexual abuse."

At the same time, Cardinal Cahal Daly, archbishop of Armagh and primate of all Ireland, who had been criticized for not taking action against a priest outside his jurisdiction, responded with anguished words: "I don't remember in my lifetime a more serious, a more painful, a more worrying and distressing time. We feel the hurt of all those who have suffered, who have been hurt, and all those whose trust in priests or religious has been abused."

In an editorial, "A moment of Truth in Ireland," the London *Tablet* concluded, "The Catholic church ought to lead opinion in these areas if it is being true to its message, but in fact it moves behind the times."

In the United States the Catholic bishops, who have grappled with this painful problem since 1988, with varying degrees of public acknowledgment, received at their November 1994 meeting in Washington detailed resource material to help them deal with such issues. However, because each of the diocesan bishops is responsible only to the pope, and not to any national conference, the recommendations are only guidelines. Not all the bishops even responded to inquiries of the bishops' own Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse, chaired by Bishop John Kinney of Bismarck, North Dakota, where Smyth had once served.

No longer can episcopal silence, the quiet transfer of offenders, or the adroit chancery cover-up attempt to protect the church's image, at the sacrifice of its pastoral concern. That is the message from Canada, Ireland, and the United States.

E. LEO McMANNUS

E. Leo McMannus is professor emeritus of English at Miami-Dade Community College, Miami, Florida.

WORLD WATCH

J. Bryan Hehir

THE ACT OF DISAGREEING

SEARCHING FOR COMMON GROUND

It is sad but often true that tragedy is a catalyst to constructive action. That fact, demonstrated during the civil rights struggle of the 1960s, when the bombing of churches would galvanize legal and legislative efforts to overcome segregation, found another expression in Boston after the murder of individuals working at abortion clinics. Responding immediately, Cardinal Bernard Law made a statement which attracted broad support and has opened avenues of discussion which were previously securely blocked.

The cardinal's statement condemned the shootings ("reprehensible acts of violence with absolutely no justification whatsoever"); called for a moratorium on prayer vigils at clinics; and asked for a new effort of civil discourse, motivated by mutual respect. While national attention has been focused on the moratorium, much of the focus in Boston has been the appeal for conversation across the barricades of prolife and prochoice constituencies. The theme is the search for "common ground" in the still highly conflicted abortion debate. While similar appeals for dialogue and the search for alternatives to abortion have been made previously by other individuals and organizations, the combination of the horror of the murders and the impact of Cardinal Law's engagement from a well-defined position opposing abortion gave his statement unique currency. The cardinal has continued the public conversation, encouraging a broad-based public dialogue in search of alternatives to abortion.

While the abortion issue is sufficiently complex and contested to provide a case study in civil discourse, it may be useful to locate the call for "common ground" dialogue in a wider framework, illustrating its potential as a method of public argument in civil society. John Courtney Murray often reminded audiences that it took a solid core of some agreement in order to debate our real disagreements. In the abortion debate the dynamic of public debate has consistently violated Murray's rule: we have confronted each other at length and loudly with our differences, but spent precious little time exploring whether they rest on any foundation of agreement.

The 1990s promise no respite on abortion, but the broader reality is that the fissures of public contention seem equally deep on other issues as well. The need for "common ground" discourse cuts across a spectrum of questions. Three issues of abortion, poverty, and euthanasia exemplify the need. The proposal offered here is that a similar structure of argument may facilitate the quest for common ground on three fronts.

For each of these issues one could distinguish the moral argument, the jurisprudential or policy arguments, and measures of practical help to those in need. The three levels offer increasing possibilities for agreement. In other words, the most difficult problem lies at the level of moral principle; policy debates offer difficult but more flexible terrain; and collaborative, immediate responses to human suffering may offer the best possibilities for cooperation among those divided by moral principles and public policies. The reasons for distinguishing the three levels of engagement are both to clarify complicated public questions, and to make clear that the search for common ground at one level cannot mean dispensing with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Paraclete Book Center

Over forty years of service to our customers throughout the world
A wide variety of thoughtfully selected titles
Among them:

JESUS: MIRIAM'S CHILD, SOPHIA'S PROPHET—Fiorenza
PATTERN OF REDEMPTION—Ochs • THE GAZE OF LOVE—Beckett
THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY—Bynum • SPIRIT IN THE WORLD—
Rahner • FREEDOM, GLORIOUS FREEDOM—McNeill • THE GROWTH OF
MYSTICISM—McGinn • RE-IMAGINING EVANGELIZATION—Brennan
LIVING THE BEATITUDES—L'Arche Community

Prompt, careful attention to your phone and gift orders

Special orders welcome — Gift certificates available
We ship worldwide — Visa & MasterCard accepted

Hours: Tuesday – Friday 10 – 6; Saturday 10 – 5

146 East 74th Street, New York, NY 10021, (212) 535-4050

other dimensions of any of the three questions.

On abortion, for example, the deepest division in American society lies at the level of moral principle, where the question is whether any directly intended abortion is morally acceptable or not. The firm negative answer of Catholic teaching stands in polar contradiction to the equally firm legitimation of at least some abortions by various prochoice individuals and organizations. These contending moral positions still allow for the possibility of some agreement at the jurisprudential or policy level. Here the more limited question is what should be legitimated, allowed, or tolerated by the civil law. It is possible, even in the clear structure of Catholic moral teaching, to tolerate legally what one opposes morally. On the other hand, at least some prochoice advocates seek to limit some abortions by law even while vigorously maintaining the legal principle of access to abortion.

While these distinctions of moral vs. legal disagreement are useful, in fact the abortion debate has generated little in the way of common ground at either level. The nature of the abortion issue, however, demands that inquiry, argument, and advocacy continue at both levels. Needless to say, the method of both moral and legal argument is persuasion not physical coercion, much less physical violence.

The third level of the question, practical expressions of human solidarity, offers the best hope for common ground. Those who vigorously disagree both morally and legally may still find meaningful engagement in providing medical, social, and material support to pregnant women.

The possibility of finding practical agreement in the midst of profound differences at the level of principle is an urgent necessity precisely because of the looming debate on euthanasia and assisted suicide. It is now tragically clear that in the 1990s the intensity of end-of-life choices will mirror the history of the abortion debate. We should be able as a society to plot a different course, but nothing so far indicates we will do so. On these issues it is already clear that a moral division exists on the question of the ethics of terminal care. Moreover, both at the level of legislative referenda and now, in the state of Washington, through the courts, profoundly divisive policies are being pursued. The moral and legal arguments must be engaged, not for "sectarian" reasons of one religious perspective, but, as Leon Kass, Daniel Callahan, and Edmund Pelligrino have argued, because of the social consequences of the assisted-suicide and euthanasia proposals. Even here, however, in the early stages of the moral-jurisprudential conflicts, there are practical programs which may bring contentious parties together to find ways for individuals to control their lives and destinies in the last stages of life. The hospice movement exemplifies a practical way to get at what seems to underlie the drive for assisted suicide, a fear among many that they will be caught in a technological trap at the end of life.

Poverty elicits a different response. One moves from bioethics as a policy problem to social ethics. Catholic teaching, however, highlights the social significance of all three issues. Moreover, the character of the national debate about the poor indicates less and less "common ground" even as the numbers in poverty grow. The moral question involves both the issues of personal responsibility for the poor and the scope of the state's responsibility in the face of human needs. There is some agreement on the first in American society, but growing division on the second. That disparity, in turn, erodes the possibility of common action at the level of public policy. The welfare debate, but also the health-care debate of 1994, demonstrates how elusive "common ground" is on addressing poverty in the 1990s. Once again the needs of the poor and the social consequences of public paralysis in the face of poverty require that both the moral and policy debates be pursued, however difficult that may be.

In spite of our obvious divisions at those two levels, however, direct immediate assistance to the poor—in shelters, feeding programs, and targeted efforts to assist children—may have the capacity to bring together those who answer moral and policy questions differently.

This threefold division of the issues may be more logical than life is on such contested questions. But the search for "common ground" in practice may offer the possibility of some limited successes even as we disagree vigorously on the higher principles and larger policy issues. □

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A LITERARY READING OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

GOD AS ONE HALF OF A TWO-CAREER HOUSEHOLD

JACK MILES

The Bible is the great repository of the sacred rather than the secular wisdom of our culture, or so we habitually think. Secular wisdom we expect to find elsewhere. And, accordingly, any conflict between the sacred and the secular that involves the Bible at all we expect to be a conflict between the Bible and something else, not a conflict within the Bible.

At least one book of the Old Testament, however, is a collection of Near Eastern secular wisdom rather than of Jewish religious wisdom. And what gives this work, the Book of Proverbs, a particular literary interest is that its secular wisdom seems to be carried in feminine rather than masculine hands. The Book of Proverbs does not explicitly oppose its secular wisdom to religious belief, much less its feminine perspective to any masculine perspective. But if one reads the Hebrew Scriptures in the traditional Jewish order, the Book of Proverbs is preceded by the Book of Psalms, and the sense of contrast—religious to secular and, subtly, male to female—as one moves from the one collection to the next is intriguing. (The Jewish order of the Scriptures places Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets in the middle, not at the end of what Christians call the Old Testament.)

God's law, which in Psalms is regarded as his most important, most abiding, and most deeply personal self-expression, yields much of its space in Proverbs to a more loosely defined, anonymous, impersonal tradition of secular wisdom, which is "preached" by Lady Wisdom, a mysteriously allegorical combination of goddess, prophetess, and angelic messenger. The emergence of Lady Wisdom as God's handmaiden or consort is accompanied by Proverbs' paradoxical reversal of the role that Psalms assigns to God.

In Psalms, God is the guarantor of justice in a world of *karma* without *samsara*—a world, that is, in which God rewards the good and punishes the evil within their own lifetimes or, at most, in the lifetimes of their children or grandchildren. Not quite so in Proverbs, where God appears for the first time (reading the Hebrew Bible in the Jewish order) as the mysterious being to whom reference must be made and recourse had when just the opposite occurs—that is, when the good are seen to be punished and the wicked rewarded.

God continues to be honored as the creator, through Wisdom, of the moral as well as the physical world, but the moral world he has created, like the physical world, enjoys an immanent order. It is a world, in other words, in which reward for the good and punishment for the wicked is on the whole a natural and therefore automatic outcome. It is not usually necessary for God to insure the functioning of this moral order by intervening ad hoc with rewards and punishments. These come about as the intrinsic result of mankind's cultivation, or otherwise, of human wisdom, a pursuit sometimes characterized as devotion to Lady Wisdom. God created the world through her, Proverbs says, and the world's normal and normally benign functioning is in her custody. God takes or is presumed to take a direct hand only in counterintuitive, unpredicted, unwelcome limit cases. In brief, when things go right automatically, as Proverbs expects that they will, God is honored as the creator of a world in which things go right automatically, while when things go wrong, God is acknowledged as the source and explanation of exceptions to the rule. In Proverbs, God is marginal as a picture frame is marginal. He is not often in the picture,

"Unfortunately, my wife completely understands me."

JACK MILES *is a member of the editorial board of the* Los Angeles Times. *The above is adapted from his book* God: A Biography, *forthcoming next month from Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. © 1995 by Jack Miles. Reprinted by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but the picture requires him.

This quasi-negative but necessary framing function for God is the meaning of a proverb—"The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord"—which is repeated almost as a mantra three times in Proverbs (1:7, 9:10, and 15:33). Its meaning, in a secular formulation, might be: "The first thing a man of understanding must understand is that there is much that he will never understand." Mankind will ever strive to bring life under control, and Proverbs commends that effort. But a man who does not recognize how much inevitably will escape his control is doomed to frustration and despair. Human understanding is, so to speak, never more than a clearing in the forest, and it is best to be prepared for this at the outset. Proverbs 16 gives this view, which is the basis for the reconciliation of Jewish Torah and secular Near Eastern wisdom, an extended gloss:

A man may arrange his thoughts,
But what he says depends on the Lord.
All the ways of a man seem right to him,
But the Lord probes motives.
Entrust your affairs to the Lord,
And your plans will succeed.
The Lord made everything for a purpose,
Even the wicked for an evil day (16:1-4).

There is no easy transposition of this last line into a secular key. Even an impersonal reformulation—"Everything has been made for a purpose, even the wicked for an evil day"—requires an act of faith. Now as then, it is at just this point that secular wisdom reaches its limit.

By speaking this way, the Book of Proverbs differs strikingly from the Book of Psalms in its implicit characterization of God. Proverbs 16:4 rebuffs the entreaty heard in literally scores of psalms that the Lord put the petitioner's wicked enemies in their place, give them what they deserve, and give the righteous petitioner his own due. "No," the Lord is here imagined to respond, "I have my purpose for them, and you must endure them."

This is both a drastic restriction and a drastic revision of the role that God otherwise assumes as protagonist of the Bible. In a sense, mankind now becomes the protagonist, and God the antagonist. The happier outcomes are assigned to human effort, and God is assigned ultimate, personal responsibility for those times when the opposition, human and circumstantial, proves insuperable. He is made, in a remarkable way, the personification of all that opposes human effort; and as such, he becomes, if not the explanation of it, then at least a name for it. In other words, instead of saying, "there is no figuring it out," Proverbs says "there is no figuring *him* out." Instead of saying "there is nothing to be done about it," Proverbs says "there is nothing to be done about *him*."

Secular, contemporary reformulations tend to make impersonal the sort of thing that Proverbs makes personal. Thus, for example, "Into each life some rain must fall" or such uglier, more recent versions as "Life's a bitch, and then you die" or "Shit happens." But these actually fall short as reformulations of Proverbs 16:4 because they are in no way confessions that life exceeds the speaker's understanding. On the contrary, they are smug in their confidence that all relevant evidence has been examined and that the ugly result is an utter certainty. In order to avoid claiming omniscience, vulgar realism would have to admit mystery in some way and thereby cease to be as terminally secular as it wishes to be.

Though 16:4, "The Lord made everything for a purpose/Even the wicked for an evil day," may have been most comforting to those who assumed that the Lord was good, the same line has a liberating potential even if nothing is assumed other than that the Lord is mysterious or even, at a further reduction, that life is a mystery and not just a mess. Better a humble but at least potentially merciful uncertainty, in short, than a proud and inevitably masochistic certainty. This is perhaps Pascal's wager two millennia before Pascal. And yet it is scarcely a triumphant moment for God himself. The world once up and running, God is now only to be summoned when things are at their worst, and so he is all but forced to be always and only his own worst self. "Comfort, comfort my people," the words he spoke to Isaiah, are now words he no longer is expected ever to speak. In most troubles, mankind comforts itself or has itself to blame. There is little scope at all for his tender mercies. Rather than a comforting person, he seems in the Book of Proverbs to be a semicomforting assumption at best and a hostile opponent at worst.

To read Proverbs after reading Psalms is rather like leaving the steamy murmur of a dim, crowded church where hidden agonies and immoderate hopes have all been on sometimes painful display and stepping into the crisp briskness of the marketplace outside the church door—close enough, to be sure, but still outside. The stakes out here in the broad daylight may be much lower, the only eloquence a rough-and-ready tartness of repartee, and yet there is something bracing about the change. Everyone still believes in God, indeed casually refers to him in every other sentence, but everyone also seems to have other business than God's in hand and to be relying on mother wit, as we might well put it, rather than on father or grandfather God. The Lord God in the Book of Proverbs begins to seem an elderly relative still nominally the head of the house but no longer very active as a manager.

In Proverbs' synthesis between Torah and wisdom, Torah—or at least the God whom Torah honors as its author—deepens wisdom. But wisdom also broadens and brightens Torah by discussing such matters as character formation and prudence, parts of human moral experience about which Torah is generally silent. The most surprising feature of this new synthesis, however, is that in it prophecy, about which Psalms maintains a notably pained silence, is revived, after a fashion, as Lady Wisdom preaching on a street corner. But what kind of prophecy does she preach? Dispensing with impassioned indictments, intoxicated visions, all mention of sinful foreign countries, and any prediction of apocalyptic doom, she has the mannerisms of a prophetess but a message that scarcely goes beyond "If you make a fool of yourself, don't say I didn't warn you." Her revival of prophecy is, in a way, its burial:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Wisdom cries aloud in the streets,
Raises her voice in the squares.
At the head of the busy streets she calls;
At the entrance of the gates, in the city, she speaks out:
"How long will you simple ones love simplicity,
You scoffers be eager to scoff,
You dullards hate knowledge?
You are indifferent to my rebuke;
I will now speak my mind to you,
And let you know my thoughts.
Since you refused me when I called,
And paid no need when I extended my hand,
You spurned all my advice,
And would not hear my rebuke,
I will laugh at your calamity,
And mock when terror comes upon you.
When terror comes like a disaster,
And calamity arrives like a whirlwind,
When trouble and distress come upon you.
Then they shall call me but I will not answer;
They shall seek me but not find me.
Because they hated knowledge,
And did not choose fear of the Lord;
They refused my advice,
And disdained all my rebukes,
They shall eat the fruit of their ways,
And have their fill of their own counsels.
The tranquillity of the simple will kill them,
And the complacency of dullards will destroy them.
But he who listens to me will dwell in safety,
Untroubled by the terror of misfortune" (1:20-33, italics added).

In biblical prophecy, the events mentioned in the italicized lines above would have been presented as punishment rather than, as here, mere comeuppance. Here the only punishment is self-inflicted; it is simply the predictable, built-in consequence of foolish behavior.

Is it surprising that this clearest, largest eruption of the feminine into the relationship of mankind and God should turn out to speak with the voice of common sense? That will depend, obviously, on what you understand by "the feminine" as also on what you expect of a mother or a wife. Historical criticism has paid little attention to the possibility that Wisdom may be either mankind's mother or God's wife, but this is largely because historical criticism has generally taken Lady Wisdom to be an ancient writer's personification of the wisdom of the male God and therefore, notwithstanding the feminine grammatical endings, male herself. She has been seen as a figure of speech loosely akin to the Word of the Lord in the endlessly repeated figure of speech "Then the Word of the Lord came to...."

I mention historical criticism and "God's wife" in the same

DISCIPLES AND DEMOCRACY

Religious Conservatives and the Future of American Politics

Edited by MICHAEL CROMARTIE

The religious right, currently the subject of intense press attention, is here scrutinized by both insiders and outside observers. Journalists **Fred Barnes** (*The New Republic*), **Michael Barone** (*U.S. News & World Report*), and **E. J. Dionne** (*Washington Post*), activists **Ralph Reed** (Christian Coalition) and **Michael Farris**, and scholarly analysts **John Green**, **Allen Hertzke**, **Michael Horowitz**, **Richard Land**, and **George Weigel** examine the agenda of religious conservatives, their influence upon the 1992 election, and whether and how they can increase their political influence in the next four years. In a foreword, **Irving Kristol** calls religious conservatives "the very core of an emerging American conservatism." The volume, published jointly by the Ethics and Public Policy Center and Eerdmans, includes brief comments by eighteen other informed observers as well. **147 pages, paper, $12.99** ■ ISBN 0-8028-0847-6

"The rise of the religious conservatives is a hot topic, and this is an indispensable study and critique. A lively, solid, and serious piece of work."
— MICHAEL NOVAK, American Enterprise Institute

"A highly thought-provoking and well-balanced introduction to a subject that is not just difficult but combustible." — CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER, syndicated columnist

Available in bookstores or from:
ETHICS AND PUBLIC POLICY CENTER
1015 15th Street N.W., #900 ■ Washington, D.C. 20005 ■ (202) 682-1200

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sentence by design. Historical criticism, the dominant form of secular Bible criticism for decades, has had to abstain from synthetic characterization of the deity whom its own research has, so to speak, surrounded. The evidence historians have amassed strongly suggests that the God of Ancient Israel arose as an amalgam of several ancient Semitic deities. However, because God is not himself a fact of history, historians are confined to talking about those who believed in him at one stage or another of his development.

Literary criticism offers, at this point, a supplement and an alternative, for whatever else God may be, he is, as the protagonist of a great literary work, a fact of the imagination, and literary critics are free to talk about him as such. A literary critic discussing Hamlet, the protagonist of *Hamlet*, may not stop with a discussion of William Shakespeare and the audience he wrote for. Those matters are more properly the province of the historian or historical critic. So also the literary critic discussing God, the protagonist of the Bible, may not stop with questions of authorship and ancient audience but must proceed to the direct discussion of God himself.

A literary characterization must take God as and only as he is found on the pages of the Bible—whether we understand this to mean, as here, the pages of the Tanakh (the Hebrew Scripture, the Jewish Bible) or the pages of the Christian Bible (The Old Testament and the New Testament). But that limitation—which philosophers and theologians, who have other sources than the Bible, properly escape—is balanced by the literary critic's right and obligation to include *everything* about God that is found on the pages of the work: the unedifying as well as the edifying, the purely fanciful as well as the philosophically profound, and so forth. Nothing may be ruled out because it is early (and primitive) or late (and corrupt). To entertain such considerations is to behave like a historian. Similarly, nothing may be ruled out because it is crude or legalistic or polemical or even inconsistent. These are dismissals that may be necessary for a theologian seeking to provide a rationalized account of God to a living religious community, but the literary critic must allow God as much interior disorder as he allows any other literary character.

The form of disorder that presents itself in the Book of Proverbs is the imperfect suppression of the feminine in the Lord. Among the deities whose personalities fused to create the Lord, one was El, the ancient Canaanite sky God. El's consort was Asherah; and figuratively speaking, when El disappeared into the emergent, celibate Lord, Asherah became a widow. At that point she could have followed El, disappearing into the Lord as her husband had done, but in fact she lived on for a time as the Lord's half-acknowledged, half-denied spouse.

Denunciations of the cult of Asherah in 2 Kings make it quite clear that she lived on both as the center of her own cult and as the spouse of the Lord. Recent archeological discoveries have reinforced this view. In time, she faded away to at most a feminine dimension in the character of the Lord, the one surviving deity. But in the Book of Proverbs, at least if we read this book as a literary critic would read it, she may be said to return in disguise as human wisdom in a feminine personification.

In Proverbs, Lady Wisdom speaks not just *for* God but also in her own name *about* God and about her relationship with him. The word *goddess* probably does misrepresent her; but even taking her as allegorical rather than mythological, she represents human wisdom in the newly autonomous sense of which we were speaking above rather than divine wisdom. As such, she may well be spoken of both as God's consort (mankind cooperating with God), and as mankind's mother (mankind caring for God's children and its own). And as both consort and mother, Wisdom wakes the echoes of Asherah, the archaic spouse of El, inherited by Yahweh.

Wisdom speaks of her double relationship with God and mankind at Proverbs 8:22-9:6:

"The Lord created me at the beginning of His course
As the first of His works of old.
In the distant past I was fashioned,
At the beginning, at the origin of earth.
There was still no deep when I was brought forth,
No springs rich in water;
Before [the foundation of] the mountains were sunk,
Before the hills I was born.
He had not yet made earth and fields,
Or the world's first clumps of clay.
I was there when He set the heavens into place;
When He fixed the horizon upon the deep;
When He made the heavens above firm,
And the fountains of the deep gushed forth;
When He assigned the sea its limits,
So that its waters never transgress His command;
When He fixed the foundations of the earth,
I was with Him as a confidant,
A source of delight every day,
Rejoicing before Him at all times,
Rejoicing in His inhabited world,
Finding delight with mankind.
Now, sons, listen to me;
Happy are they who keep my ways.
Heed discipline and become wise;
Do not spurn it.
Happy is the man who listens to me,
Coming early to my gates each day,
Waiting outside my doors.
For he who finds me finds life
And obtains favor from the Lord.
But he who misses me destroys himself;
All who hate me love death."

Wisdom has built her house,
She has hewn her seven pillars.
She has prepared the feast,
Mixed the wine,
And also set the table.
She has sent out her maids to announce
On the heights of the town,
"Let the simple enter here";
To those devoid of sense she says,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Come, eat my food
And drink the wine that I have mixed;
Give up simpleness and live,
Walk in the way of understanding."

At the point in this speech where Wisdom says to mankind, "Now, sons, listen to me," the burden of proof might seem to shift to those who would deny that she is in any way a mother, not just because of the use of the word *banim*, "sons" or "children," but also because of the clearly parental manner. But in what sense, if any, can the speaker be a wife? True, the fact that God has created her by no means rules out this possibility. As his wife, in any ancient Near Eastern context, she would not need to be his uncreated equal. Nothing would prevent him from creating her as his consort after or—as she insists—before creating mankind. No, the difficulty in naming Wisdom as God's consort seems to lie rather in the fact that, despite his delight in her, she seems as much assistant as companion. She is a builder, a butcher, a baker, a vintner, as well as a teacher and a "confidant." But does all this taken together make her a wife?

Obviously, one must first ask: What is a wife? In the entire Bible, there is only one extended description of the wife, and it comes, as it happens, in just this book, at Proverbs 31:10-31, which opens:

What a rare find is a capable wife!
Her worth is far beyond that of rubies.
Her husband puts his confidence in her,
And lacks no good thing.
She is good to him, never bad,
All the days of her life.
She looks for wool and flax,
And sets her hand to them with a will.
She is like a merchant fleet,
Bringing her food from afar.
She rises while it is still night,
And supplies provisions for her household,
The daily fare of her maids.
She sets her mind on an estate and acquires it;
She plants a vineyard by her own labors.
She girds herself with strength
And performs her tasks with vigor (31:10-17).

In the ancient Near East, wives were both a form and a source of wealth for their husbands. Like Lady Wisdom, the good wife in the description just quoted combines delight with good management. If we find this combination in Lady Wisdom, we may infer, therefore, that she is to be considered, at least metaphorically, as God's wife. She and God do not have even an analogous genital relationship. There is not the slightest hint of that in the text. But she is genuinely female in the same characterological way that he is always genuinely male, and their partnership to that extent is a connubium. And if in addition she represents mankind as a whole, where is the difficulty? In the prophets, God has repeatedly and ardently called himself Israel's husband, turning Israel's covenant into a sacred marriage. Here, he would be mankind's husband in a relationship in which mankind plays the role of an unusually vigorous and self-reliant wife.

It need come as no surprise that as the Old Testament turns its attention to practical skills, its attention to women should grow. Before as well as after the exile, several of Israel's larger neighbors enjoyed a noticeably higher level of material development than Israel did as well as a deeper integration into world commerce. The skilled workmen who built David's palace and Solomon's temple were brought in from Phoenicia. Certainly before and probably after the exile, foreign wives were a major channel by which non-Israelite material culture entered Israelite life. Despite the severe strictures placed on intermarriage in Torah, Moses, David, and, most notoriously, Solomon (not to speak of Abraham, Judah, and Joseph), all are reported to have had foreign wives. Solomon's many wives are blamed in 1 Kings for the introduction of foreign religion into Israel, but doubtless they also brought foreign crafts, languages, music, food, and so on—in short, all the foreign forms of industry and wealth—with them as well, and doubtless they taught what they brought with them to their Israelite sisters. Over time, the sense may well have grown up in Israel that women, especially foreign women, were the repository of much of the material expertise of the world.

If this is the case, then we should not assume that every time Proverbs begins one of its anonymous speeches "My son," a father is to be imagined as the speaker. The New Revised Standard Version's "inclusive language," substituting "My child" for "My son" throughout, is at odds with the content of a good many speeches that seem explicitly aimed at young men; but if it is rarely easy to imagine a young woman as the hearer, it is often quite easy to imagine an older woman as the speaker. Not that Proverbs is a feminist text: By contemporary standards, it is serenely sexist, inveighing repeatedly, for example, against the loose woman with nary a word about the loose man. But often a closer look exposes an interesting ambiguity, especially, as it happens, where sexual morality is concerned.

Who is speaking in Proverbs 7, a long speech against the loose woman that is barely begun before it turns to an eyewitness account of seduction as seen through a latticed window? A man might, of course, witness a seduction through a latticed window, but this is just the vantage from which, in a Near Eastern society accustomed to female enclosure, a respectable woman would be most likely to witness such a scene. It is easy to imagine, as a result, that "my son" is being warned against the loose woman by his mother. Daringly, the speaker imagines a woman of her own social class, a woman married to a man of some means, betraying her husband in his absence by seducing a young stranger. Who but a mother could imagine so well what a woman of a certain age might say to an innocent like her boy?

From the window of my house,
Through my lattice, I looked out
And saw among the simple,
Noticed among the youths,
A lad devoid of sense.
He was crossing the street near her corner,
Walking toward her house

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the dusk of evening,
In the dark hours of night.
A woman comes toward him
Dressed like a harlot, with set purpose.
She is bustling and restive;
She is never at home.
Now in the street, now in the square,
She lurks at every corner.
She lays hold of him and kisses him;
Brazenly she says to him,
"I had to make a sacrifice of well-being;
Today I fulfilled my vows.
Therefore I have come out to you,
Seeking you, and have found you.
I have decked my couch with covers
Of dyed Egyptian linen;
I have sprinkled my bed
With myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.
Let us drink our fill of love till morning;
Let us delight in amorous embrace.
For the man of the house is away;
He is off on a distant journey.
He took his bag of money with him
And will return only at mid-month" (7:6-20).

Female authorship seems plausible for this passage on another ground than the lattice window. Though obviously full of resentment and censure, the writer is quite without the kind of visceral revulsion that the prophets so often seem to feel at the very thought of a woman in a state of sexual arousal. The writer sees the loose woman as, with all her faults, a fellow human being and not, as a Jeremiah would see her, as a beast in heat:

A wild she-donkey, at home in the desert,
snuffing the breeze in desire;
who can control her when she is in heat?
Males need not trouble to look for her,
they will find her in her month
(Jeremiah 2:24; Jerusalem Bible).

Metaphorical prostitution and literal prostitution, male as well as female, are inseparable for the prophets, and for a good reason: When Jeremiah begins his indictment of Israel for Baal-worship by saying, "On every high hill and under every green tree you have sprawled and played the whore," he is referring to sacral fornication that was a part of the fertility cult of Baal and Asherah. But what is it that appalls him more, apostasy or fornication? For Proverbs, a whore at her most brazen is not to be compared to an unclean animal in heat.

Proverbs may have occasional sharp words about sexual misconduct, but much of the time its writers simply show a lively interest in the subject. Whom do we imagine, what kind of man or woman, juxtaposing the following two bons mots?

1. Three things are too wonderful for me;
four I do not understand:
the way of an eagle in the sky,
the way of a serpent on a rock,
the way of a ship on the high seas,
and the way of a man with a maiden.

2. This is the way of an adulteress:
she eats, and wipes her mouth,
and says, "I have done no wrong" (RSV: Prov. 30:18-20).

This is, as the saying goes, splitting the arrow, a bull's eye followed by another bull's eye, eloquence about the wonder of sexual love followed by superb bluntness about the ugliness to which it can sometimes degenerate. There is no reason whatsoever why "my son" might not have seen both arrows shot by his mother.

So might he also have heard from her, especially given her demonstrated interest in industry and the practical arts, the wry and pungent lesson offered at 6:6-11:

Lazybones, go to the ant;
Study its ways and learn.
Without leaders, officers, or rulers,
It lays up its stores during the summer,
Gathers in its food at the harvest.
How long will you lie there, lazybones;
When will you wake from your sleep?:
A bit more sleep, a bit more slumber,
A bit more hugging yourself in bed,
And poverty will come calling upon you,
And want, like a man with a shield.

Surely it is beyond argument that, time out of mind, Jewish parents, like all parents, have found themselves urging industry upon their children. And yet until Proverbs such sentiments do not receive even the most modest formal accommodation in Jewish religious experience. No book of the Old Testament before Proverbs contains anything comparable to "Go to the ant." The decalogue contains no commandment "Thou shalt work." And on innumerable occasions God has stressed in speaking to his people that it was on his power rather than their own that they should rely. Perhaps the most striking example of this is Deuteronomy 6:10-12:

When the Lord your God brings you into the land that He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to assign to you—great and flourishing cities that you did not build, houses full of all good things that you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant—and you eat your fill, take heed that you do not forget the Lord who freed you from the land of Egypt, the house of bondage.

Moses is not licensing laziness per se, but his aggressive deemphasis of the importance of human effort in Israelite achievement began a tradition which continues unbroken to the point we have now reached—not, we may be sure, in the unwritten life of the nation but very definitely in its written literature.

Sigmund Freud defined happiness, famously, as "*Lieben und Arbeiten*," "love and work." Lady Wisdom, as we have just seen, is frank about sex and frankly interested in sex, a hard worker and an advocate of hard work. She is not Asherah redux, but she does take Asherah's ancient symbol, the tree, as her own:

She [Wisdom] is a tree of life to those who grasp her,
And whoever holds on to her is happy (Prov. 3:18).

We may recall that the tree of life was the tree whose fruit the Lord God feared Adam and Eve would "take also...and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eat, and live forever" (Gen. 3:22). This tree was the second for which the Lord God was concerned. The first, the object of his direct prohibition, was the one called "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." After Adam and Eve ate from that tree, the Lord God said: "Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil." However, for Adam and Eve themselves, that first tree seems to have been not very unlike the spreading green tree of Asherah, for when they tasted its fruit, they knew desire for the first time: "Then...they knew that they were naked."

When Lady Wisdom places herself in the primal scene of creation, close to God in a relationship of delight, and when we find her represented by the tree of life, a tree standing not just for sexual fertility but for all the practical skills that support life, we hear many echoes of Asherah. But if Asherah once feminized God's character by being absorbed into it, Wisdom remains distinct from him by representing, instead, collective humanity, God's image and God's antagonist. God's full command to his image at Gen. 1:28 was: "Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth." If the first half of that command was a command to beget and bear children, the second half was a command to use wisdom—the created, human strengths of mind and body—to provide all that children would require. God's relationship with Adam and Eve, though the word *covenant* is never used of his relationship with them, was implicitly a covenant that, minimally, he would not prevent what he had commanded. But then, at the flood, he did prevent it; and after the flood, his covenant with Abraham compromised it. Lady Wisdom personifies mankind, by a roundabout path indeed, obeying God's initial command and reclaiming God's initial promise. □

SCREEN

ROYAL TREATMENT

BENNETT'S 'KING GEORGE'

There is much to praise in *The Madness of King George*. Adapting his own play, Alan Bennett hasn't attempted in-depth characterization but instead gives us a panoramic view of how England's politics and court life were affected by George III's derangement. The playwright's adroitness must be admired. He keeps all the narrative threads firmly in hand, never lets them get tangled: the political duel of Prime Minister Pitt with opposition leader Charles Fox; the machinations of the prince, driven by a sense of his own uselessness to subvert his father; the desperation of Queen Henrietta to stay in touch with her husband as the phalanxes of physicians and politicians form about him; the rivalry of the doctors, each cosseting and advancing his own theory; and the various flutterings and confusions felt in the ranks of equerries, ladies-in-waiting, and manservants. Best of all, Bennett never lets the audience forget that a suffering human being is the center of all the whirligig politicking and scheming. The afflicted king is mad yet sane enough to be an appalled observer of his madness. Bennett holds the king's repulsiveness and pathos in such tactful equipoise that the splendid Nigel Hawthorne is free to create a man *in extremis* rather than a walking, talking disease.

In fact, the entire cast is splendid. The British repertory system here has its usual triumph. The smallest part is executed not just with technical competence but with flair, as if each player knew that an entire play could be written about his/her character.

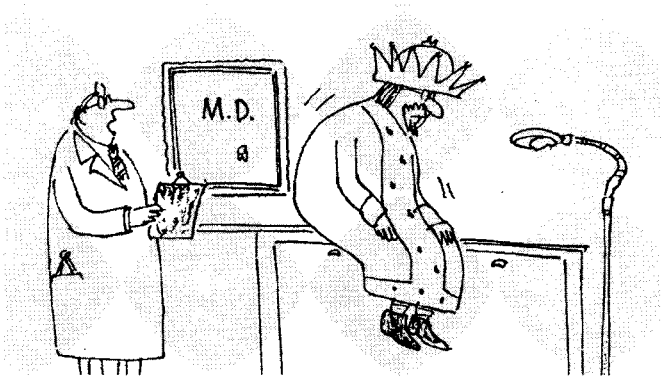
Nicholas Hytner, the virtuoso stage director (*Miss Saigon, Carousel*, and the stage version of *King George*) whose first film this is, takes charge of his new realm without fuss or timidity. The battle of wills between King George and Doctor Willis becomes, in close-up, a battle of eyes. The takeover of the king's chambers by Willis's orderlies is choreographed with frightening brilliance as a miniature palace coup. And the various outbursts by the king and the court reactions to them are expertly modulated: they skirt black comedy without ever dehumanizing a suffering man or his embarrassed attendants. The film's set designer, Ken Adam, wonderfully abets Hytner by creating a palace world both immense and cramped: the hallways down which bowing ministers retreat seem endless, but the royal pages sleep three in a wardrobe, as if they were just so many toys tossed into a box at the end of the day.

Nevertheless, this movie left me...not exactly cold but dissatisfied, as if I had gone to a four-star restaurant, been served a course of succulent appetizers, and then been informed that the main course had been canceled. I can come up with two reasons for my reaction. First, a glaze of cynicism coats the political events in this story, trivializing the meaning of George's madness as a public catastrophe. Second, a certain diffidence of Bennett's in regard to the nature of madness somewhat confuses our responses to the king's illness as a personal affliction.

On the political level, the king's madness nearly results in his deposal in favor of his son, which would entail Pitt's replacement as prime minister by the Whig, Fox. Much is made of this threat as the picture races toward its climax. But no audience, at least no non-British audience, has an emotional stake in the struggle of Pitt against Fox, Tory against Whig. We may desire that George not be deposed because we think him a kind man, but why should we care if the king's Tory party is toppled? If Pitt is a cold-fish keeper of balance sheets and the Whig leader is an unctuous schemer, what is our choice? As a dramatist, Bennett insists on attaching a political urgency to George's restoration to power, yet nothing in the way he portrays the king's friends and enemies supports that urgency.

As to the depiction of the madness itself, any criticism of Bennett's handling of it must be tempered by the fact that the very subject of madness is now more difficult for dramatists and novelists to explore than at any time in the history of drama. Every insight achieved by contemporary science uncovers a new

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



"You're under too much stress. Have you considered a lighter crown?"

area of uncertainty. When Shakespeare dealt with madness in *King Lear*, he presumed that it was both a punishment for Lear's shortsightedness and injustice to Cordelia and a frenzied accession of wisdom that opens the tyrant's eyes to the suffering of all humanity. Apart from the bard's genius, it was his Elizabethan ignorance of clinical explanations of insanity that made him confident enough to achieve coherence and poetry.

Bennett knows, among other things, that a disease called porphyria, by chemically affecting the nervous system, may have caused George's condition. But after such knowledge, what insights?

Bennett is much concerned with the reality and possible unreality of the personality. Is the personality a social manifestation of something real inside us or is it a flimsy construction that insanity can sweep away? Is madness the horrible exaggeration of one's real personality or is it an invasion, an undermining, a sabotaging of the personality?

Bennett begins his questioning brilliantly. He and director Hytner give Nigel Hawthorne a wonderful moment in the opening credits sequence that the actor executes to perfection. Dressing for an appearance before Parliament, George is shown talking affectionately to his wife, comforting a tearful toddler daughter, and bullying his foppish son. He is a bluff, gruff, commonsensical, almost exaggeratedly sane man, the "Farmer George" that his people love. But when he is called to enter Parliament, Hawthorne sets his face into a red, angry mask and grits out the word, "Right!" between his teeth, as if he would like to chew all the politicians up and spit them out. It's not a change from but an aggravation of his bluff, John-Bullish self. But, as the madness takes hold, and George charges onto a cricket field, roughly pushing aside children to show them how to bat, or takes over an orchestra to show them how to really play Handel, the king seems like a John Bull gone crazy. And when he attacks a handsome lady-in-waiting whom he's long eyed but (being a faithful husband) never before harassed, isn't this an enactment of frustrated desire? So the madness of King George is indeed a horrible exaggeration of George's real self—right?

Well, perhaps not. When George laments to his wife that he must spill the obscene words that have lodged themselves in his brain, doesn't that suggest a psychological invasion, an overthrow of George's real personality? After his madness abates, he questions Lady Pembroke as to whether he attacked her or not. He professes no memory of it. Has he blocked out the memory of sexual violence or has he really no memory of a deed he committed when he was literally not himself? Indeed, when George tells Doctor Willis that the king is not "here" (that is, inside his body) and "the king is somewhere else," doesn't that suggest an estrangement from his true nature rather than a monstrous enlargement of it? On the other hand, doesn't the fact that Doctor Willis's methods, which are as brutally punitive as those of an old-fashioned schoolmaster disciplining a ruffian child, do indeed work (at least for a while) suggest that the king's grossness actually reflects his desires and that the insanity simply unloosed the id from the royal superego's control? Maybe. Maybe.

I'm not faulting Alan Bennett for not diagnosing King George. He's a dramatist, not a doctor. But by shifting from one notion of madness to another, he teases the mind without satisfying it. As I initially stated, Bennett's aim is not primarily psychological but panoramic. But, since the political wars of that era carry little weight as presented here, the viewer must finally be moved by psychology—the presentation of the king's pathetic state. And on this level there is enough piteousness—the king's separation from his family, his physical agony—to move the viewer in isolated, short-lived moments.

But a truly stirring, poetic account of physically caused madness is nowadays achievable, perhaps, only by imaginative clinical writers such as Oliver Sacks. Novelists and playwrights should be wary of entering this emotional territory. They lack Shakespeare's splendid ignorance.

Postscript: I've just seen *Madness* a second time and, although I stand by what I've written above, the film has so much to stimulate the mind and please the eye that it proved more fascinating at this viewing than at the first. Anyway, why shouldn't the mind be teased upon occasion rather than satisfied?

RICHARD ALLEVA

MEDIA

THE VALUES THING

IT'S NOONAN AGAIN IN AMERICA

A specter is haunting America: the specter of old-fashioned values.

Never mind, for the moment, just what those values are—or were: the important thing is that everybody seems to feel that we've lost them. Know that stomach-dropping feeling when you're in a strange town and you idly reach into your pocket for your car keys and *they're not there*? If you can summon up that special, omigod disoriented panic, then I think you're close to understanding the current national mood, from the mid-Clinton election to the shift in recent social/historical studies of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

American scene to my main subject (see? I *always* have a subject), the new three-part series on PBS, "On Values: Conversations with Peggy Noonan."

Right: Peggy Noonan. The Svengali—Svengalette?—who crafted all those speeches that convinced so many that Ronny Reagan—the Pinocchio of late capitalism—had a shining vision of a return to the old verities, of morning in America, smelling the coffee, killing the bear in the woods, or whatever he was told to say. She even wrote a book about it, boasting—with justification—that it was she who was the authentic voice of the Great Communicator. So *she*, already, is hosting a show on old-fashioned values? But we'll get back to Sister Noonan.

More important is that her series appears when it does, and where it does: in 1995 and on PBS. Think again and, as an acting coach would say, save the panic of the moment of the missing car keys.

You never thought you'd lose them, did you? Whatever else happened, they were supposed to be there. And then, all of a sudden, they weren't. Now you know why the Republicans cleaned the clock in November '94. They told us they'd help us find the keys.

Maybe it all went goofy in 1933 with the New Deal; or maybe in 1964 with the Great Society; or maybe (ssh! we're not supposed to say this) in 1980 with the Reagan Revolution. Whatever, we've witnessed and continue to witness a decline in what we now, with a quiet and bitter smile, call our culture. Even I, a rapidly aging and unreconstructed liberal, share the vertigo: and as the Yiddish proverb says, when three people tell you you're drunk—lie down.

Now the Newt-onian system of the universe tells us that this malaise can be cured by fixing up the intrusiveness of that bad, bad federal government. My only problem with that—and, God help me, I *like* Brother Gingrich—is that it keeps things at the same, social-engineering-from-D.C. level that everybody's blaming for our present quandary to begin with. The conservatives are almost right—surely righter, at the present time, than the mummified remains of the liberals—but not right enough. "In times of degeneration," says the *Tao te Ching*, "wise counselors will arise." And the *Tao* never leads you astray: enter, or re-enter, stage right, Sister Noonan.

Mind you, I think "On Values" is pretty shoddy stuff. The camera work is strictly early-fifties' talking heads, the dialog (written by Noonan) is as canned as Campbell's Soup, and the preordained conclusion of the whole thing—essentially, folks, we jes' gotta git oursel's back to the things that really matter—is about as helpful as a single Tylenol and as socially incisive as *really bad* Steinbeck. But yet and still, as my ROTC instructor, Sargeant Crowley, was interminably fond of saying: yet and still, it matters that a series even as clumsy and partisan as *this* one address an issue as critical as this one. After all, the first step in finding your car keys is realizing that they're missing. And "On Values" at least does that: tries to talk about what none of the commercial networks, for all their gloss, seem capable of articulating, that we are all walking around, like characters in a surrealist film, with a nagging sense of loss in our souls and in our eyes—moral amputees.

The series is three one-hour episodes, titled "Faith," "Family," and "Freedom." In each episode, Noonan interviews three people from various ranges of the spectrum on the *question du jour*. The first episode, for example—"Faith"—features the Reverend Richard John Neuhaus, a cautious priest; Michael Lerner, the passionate editor of the Jewish journal *Tikkun*; and Bill Moyers, one of those Southern Baptist boys who hit the D.C. jackpot by a combination of brilliance and the timely choice of coattails. It's like all those jokes that begin, "Okay, this priest, this rabbi, and this minister are in a bar...." The pity is that all these guys—and all the interviewees on the other shows—have really different and really pause-giving things to say: but, through the unrelenting and intrusive presence of Sister Noonan, their differences all become finally a sort of uniform ideological mush. Ever have grits *without* butter and salt?

God knoweth the Noonan is made for TV. She interviews with a throaty, 900-number voice. And she looks like Sigourney Weaver, dyed strawberry blonde, playing Miss Jean Brodie. But her take "on values" is, in the end, as anemically prim and censoriously smug as that unspiked eggnog of a book, *The Book of Virtues*. (It's author William Bennett, and Noonan, in fact, should consider doing some gigs as the Tracy and Hepburn of the Frightened Right.) At one arresting point in the second episode, "Family," la Noonan is interviewing an unmarried single-parent mother—author Annie LaMotte—and as Annie, a committed Christian, talks about raising her kid, ol' Peg—also a divorced single parent—interrupts her by saying, in that only-for-*you*-baby voice, "But you're making it all sound too happy and too wonderful." And Annie, on cue, shifts her tone and attitude.

Now I hate the idea of divorce, too—and I hate it as only a veteran can. It's like dying, as my wife Celeste says—but you still have to wake up the next day. What offends me about "On Values" is its general, elitist assumption that only the best and most sensitive of us—Noonan, you, and me—feel the emptiness. This is top-down morality, analogous to the trickle-down theory of wealth that Noonan and others re-invented for the Reagan Revolution. And—to formulate a very subtle political/moral position—it's dead wrong.

That very serious, widely mourned man, Christopher Lasch, in his last book, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*, argued that the social engineers of the post-New Deal era have produced a government that is in conflict with the idea of culture: a set of sterile legalisms of "rights" that in fact wars against the imperatives of "duties." Lasch's book is to Noonan's series as *King Lear* is to a Road Runner cartoon. Having lost our original certainties, can we regain them by simply making believe the loss never occurred? You want to try to *think* your car keys back into your pocket? *Sei gesund.*

What "On Values" does accomplish, though, is at least an opening of the question—and on PBS, the channel that Newt & Co., self-appointed guardians of our moral sense, want to trash. And that's important for those of us who want to live *neither* in "Father Knows Best" *nor* in "Married with Children."

A cheer-and-a-half to Noonan, and here's to the agonizing search for values—which is, itself, a value.

FRANK McCONNELL

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Clearing the decks of orthodoxy

JESUS: MIRIAM'S CHILD, SOPHIA'S PROPHET
Critical Issues in Feminist Christology
Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza
Continuum, $22.95, 262 pp.

Dennis M. Doyle

About ten years ago, soon after the publication of *In Memory of Her*, I saw Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza walking across a hotel lobby at a convention. Recognizing her face from the book's back cover, I hurried over and introduced myself. I told her how I had first skipped ahead to the epilogue about the *ekklesia* of women and concluded that she was too radical for me, but that after starting over at the beginning and working my way through I found that the epilogue..."Was not radical enough?" she interrupted. I replied that I had found it to be just about right, though if I had been more honest I would have said only that I felt less uncomfortable with it on second reading. She sensed my hesitancy. I recall her demeanor as animated and warm as she said, "At least you've read it. And you've taken it seriously. That's more than I can say for a lot of people, and it's really all that I'm asking."

I am glad that I had this "memory of her" as I read Schüssler Fiorenza's latest offering, which explores feminist liberation understandings of Jesus. As she uses the story of Mary visiting Elizabeth to frame her book, so I used the context of an affirming personal encounter (with Elisabeth, no less!) to frame my reception of her book. That encounter underlined for me her claim that she wants her positions neither to be taken as the only "correct" ones nor to be dismissed relativistically, but rather "to stage a critical conversation and public debate among those gathered around the Christological table set by Divine Wisdom."

Finding my place at the table helped me somewhat to digest Schüssler Fiorenza's deconstruction of the declarations of the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), declarations which I interpret as inclusive, inspired, and normative for all Christians. Chalcedon came about because disagreements over the faith were dividing the fifth-century church and causing discord throughout the Roman Empire. Delegates of the emperor prompted the council fathers to issue a statement settling the matter. By proclaiming that Jesus is one person with two natures, Chalcedon set broad boundaries ruling out interpretations that deny either Jesus' divinity or Jesus' humanity. As played out in history, the council's boundaries left room for many different orthodox ways of conceiving of Jesus. Chalcedon was an attempt, or so many interpreters have argued, to raise the status of all humanity by emphasizing the humanity of Jesus.

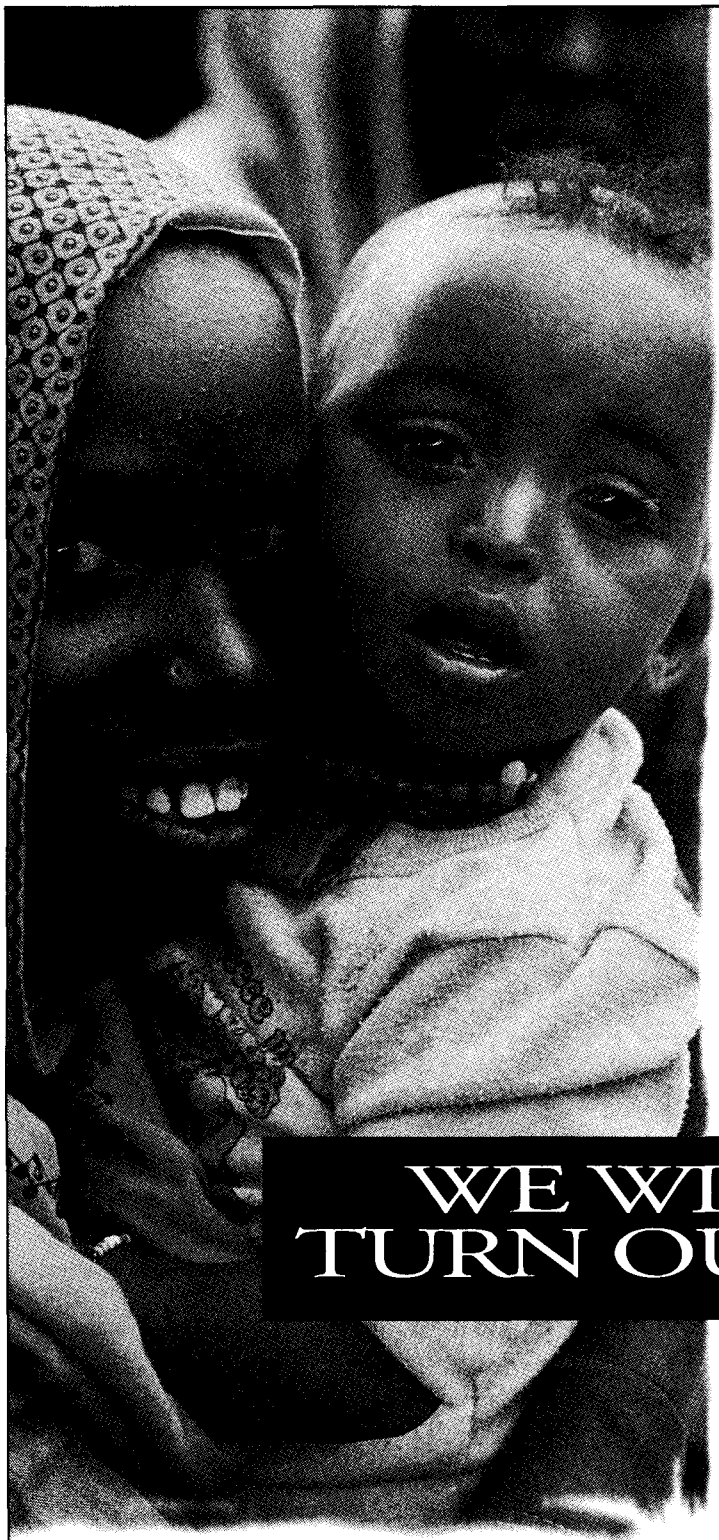
In contrast to the conventional reading of Chalcedon, Schüssler Fiorenza offers an alternative based on a feminist "hermeneutics of suspicion." She claims such an approach allows her to expose the structures of domination underlying texts in order to assess the effects of those structures on women and other oppressed people. With no acknowledgment of the emperor's role in preserving peace in the empire, she finds the very fact of imperial involvement damning. Because the council issued a long and stern list of anathemas, she interprets the doctrine as exclusive. Because the word *oikonomia* (management of household) plays a key role in the Greek text, she concludes that the council reinforced patriarchal structures of domination. But most important, she charges that by associating fatherhood with God and motherhood with humanity Chalcedon contributes to the gendering of divinity and the legitimation of the cultural sex/gender system.

"I'll make a deal with you. I'll stop trying to put words in your mouth if you'll stop trying to put thoughts in my head."

Although this last charge merits serious consideration, I do not find her cursory arguments convincing. My impression is that Schüssler Fiorenza wants to clear the decks of orthodoxy in order to go about her interpretations of Scripture unburdened, and so she assembles a host of "reasons" to jettison the most classic of Christian formulations. She views doctrines not as expressions of truths but as rhetorical strategies that often hinder movements of liberation. She differentiates her vision from Marxism by claiming her own to be more radically inclusive in terms of gender, race, and sexual orientation, and by stressing the potentially positive roles of religion and of ideological constructs. She deconstructs Christian doctrines in order to reconstruct, in dialogue with scriptural sources, new visions that she hopes will prove more fruitful for women and for anyone who is oppressed.

Schüssler Fiorenza argues that the belief that human beings can be essentially differentiated into "male" and "female" on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



As Catholics, we will not turn our backs on the needs of a world that hungers for justice and peace. We will continue to have compassion. We will continue to give hope. We will continue to save lives. We will do all of this and more, because our Church embraces the world.

WE WILL NOT TURN OUR BACKS.

Give in your parish on March 26
or send your contribution to USCC / ABOA
P.O. Box 73140-F · Baltimore, MD 21273

AMERICAN BISHOPS' OVERSEAS APPEAL

UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES · MIGRATION AND REFUGEE SERVICES
The Holy Father's Relief Fund · U.S. Catholic Conference's Department of Social Development and World Peace

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a biological or other basis is a dualistic and oppressive discursive construct. She finds that the cultural sex/gender system operates as an unexamined assumption even in the work of many feminist theologians and scholars, especially those who celebrate a feminine dimension in God or in Jesus, or who try to highlight the feminine contribution of Mary.

Such projects, Schüssler Fiorenza argues, inevitably buy into and reinforce the very presuppositions about masculinity and femininity that lie at the root of the problem. She wants to uproot this sex/gender system by grounding her own vision within the context of emancipatory movements throughout history that confront structures of domination and exclusivity and seek to replace them with democratic and egalitarian practices. To this end she shifts her focus from the councils to the Gospels. She offers radically inclusive reinterpretations of Mary as a young pregnant woman struggling against victimization, of Jesus as Wisdom's spokesperson, of the theology of the cross as an indictment of imperial power, and of the Resurrection as a vindication of the struggle for a better world.

At moments I felt as though the table set by Divine Wisdom were an operating table, and that the heart of my faith was being cut out without anesthesia. Surgically removed was any traditional understanding of incarnation, of Trinity, of submission to the will of the Father, of the guiding inspiration of the Holy Spirit, of basic trust in the tradition, of appreciation of the love and joy that has informed the Christian life throughout the centuries in spite of it all. Also removed was any belief in the superiority of Jesus, for such, she holds, would be anti-Semitic and anti-egalitarian. Left in place is a Jesus movement, insofar as it is emancipatory for women and others, and some stories, many by and about women, that provide fertile ground for nurturing the imaginations of those committed to liberation.

Readers should not allow Schüssler Fiorenza's dazzling insights and inventive terminology to disguise the limitations in her approach. Traditional doctrines that she treats as rhetorical constructs express the meanings and truths upon which many Christians base their lives. Although she raises important questions about Chalcedon and gender, she too easily dismisses the hard-won theology of that council. By starting over, as it were, from scratch, she subordinates the history of Christian doctrine to her own utopian vision of egalitarian emancipation.

But the book is more than this. My personal visitation with the author draws me to seek a fuller account, one that acknowledges both of our places at Wisdom's table. I have come to read Schüssler Fiorenza's work similarly to the way that I read the third-century Origen of Alexandria. Origen was not a heretic, though his work was later condemned. Instead, the brilliant and imaginative Origen was pre-orthodox. He dealt with many issues before they were settled. Schüssler Fiorenza's method is intentionally "unsettling." She moves back behind orthodox teachings to reconsider Christianity at its core, as though she wishes to conceptually travel back in time to erase blemishes that have scarred the faith throughout the history of its inculturation. In accord with my own doctrinal presuppositions, I do not think that one could use her deconstructive starting point to arrive at anything like an adequate Christology; at the same time, however, no Christology today will be adequate that does not take seriously her unsettling challenge to assess critically how social and political forces have shaped Christian doctrine and how those doctrines impact the lives of women and others. □

LET THE THUNDER ROLL

BEYOND NAIVE BELIEF
The Bible and Adult Catholic Faith
Paul E. Dinter
Crossroad, $29.95, 348 pp.

Dennis O'Brien

Paul Dinter spent fifteen years as Catholic chaplain at Columbia University. *Beyond Naive Belief* is best appreciated as a reflection on preaching to college congregations: Sacred Scripture for Skeptics. The university community is most likely to be dominated by two different brands of skepticism: amateur and professional. The adolescent student population expresses a sort of reflex rebelliousness against authority; the professoriat a deliberated doubt on all absolutist claims. Dinter reflects on both skepticisms and finds a common connection. The adolescent is in rebellion against the naive emotional ties of childhood; the faculty pursues the Enlightenment's rebellion against the historical childhood of human culture.

Individuals and historical human culture begin life with "mythopoetic" beliefs which become the emotional foundation of later life. A mother consoles a child in a thunderstorm: "Everything is all right." But, of course, everything does not turn out to be exactly, or always, or largely "all right." The nursery lesson is unlearned. Melville describes the trajectory: "Through infancy's unconscious spell, boyhood's thoughtless faith, adolescence's doubt (the common doom), then skepticism, then disbelief, resting on manhood's pondering repose of If." Dinter explains the common doom of adolescent skepticism via Freud's analysis of the course of human maturation. Sexual awakening in adolescence propels the individual out of naive emotional bonding toward independence. Adolescence is the great crisis of maturity and it is not always traversed; it is always traversed with travail. Dinter summarizes: "[T]he developing adolescent's inner struggle relates to...the loss of an early certainty about self and world and the new-found freedom...[and] is exhilarating and frightening at the same time. This causes...overreactions: ideological identification, peer group overidentification...the loss of self in mass movements or musical subcultures, and, tragically, the compulsion to avoid it all through suicide." As a consequence, freshmen are a tough con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

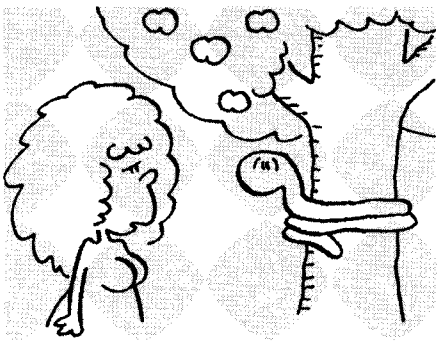
gregation for a traditional gospel.

Faculty may be no better. Having delineated a Freudian course for individual growth (or lack thereof), Dinter makes bold to apply a similar analysis to cultural history. Human culture begins with the emotional childhood of the race expressed in the great mythic stories (Gilgamesh, Homer, the Bible). But the time comes when these emotional reassurances falter before fact. The Enlightenment brings critical rationality to bear on biblical tales and moves to "disbelief and manhood's pondering repose of If." Neither the rebellious adolescent nor the rationalist professor can accept childhood tales as sensible or salvific. So it goes—and so have collegiate congregations gone: out the door.

Dinter regards both the adolescent and the rationalist university tutor as cases of "arrested development." One needs to move through the common doom and disbelief, from childhood naiveté to the "second naiveté" in which our emotional foundation is recovered in adult form. One can learn from the "hermeneutic of suspicion" but still affirm a faith, albeit with, as he says, a "whispered 'no'" for each dogmatic proclamation. To that end, Dinter judges the current posture of the official church in Rome counterproductive—well, disastrous would be more accurate.

In the first place, they don't read the Bible correctly. As recently as *Humani generis* (1950) it was claimed that the first eleven books of Genesis were historical record. While Catholic biblical scholarship has now caught up with the nineteenth century and so on, the curia has not. Powerful mythic structures continue to be purveyed as putative fact. Rome not only muddles the message, it mistakes the method. Dinter rejects Vatican I's doctrine of infallibility as narcissistic fabrication. He resymbolizes the two infallible Marian dogmas of recent memory, the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, rejecting any proven or necessary relation to "fact" and reordering their importance down Vatican II's "hierarchy of Christian truths."

I am sympathetic with the direction of Dinter's argument. The discussion of adolescence and the problems of traditional faith is perceptive and valuable. I would raise two fundamental questions, however: one regarding the argument, the second with the character of the conclusion.



"If they're so great, how come I never see you *eating any?"*

Despite important disclaimers about details, some version of the Freudian trajectory is persuasive about individual development; it is much less plausible in regard to great cultural movements. Freud's own psychoanalysis of history is highly dubious. The childhood-to-adulthood mythology of history is itself an Enlightenment fiction and I am as distrustful of it in Dinter as in Diderot. I wonder whether Dinter's account of cultural history does not commit the same error as his curial nemesis: passing off myth as fact.

My uneasiness about the historical account of academic rationality is reinforced by queasiness about Dinter's final position. While I agree with the need to re-integrate a kind of childhood naiveté into adult maturity, I could not detect in Dinter whether Christian symbolism had some special capacity to accomplish this. More serious, I think, is that Dinter's larger argument never quite reaches what I would call the lived "density" of religious belief. While it certainly is true that a second naiveté cannot have the consoling immediacy of first naiveté ("...nothing can bring back the hour/Of splendor in the grass..."), Dinter's characterization of the end-state may be too infected with the academic setting in which he preached for so many years. It is indeed a mark of "rationality" and good theology to utter dogmatic proclamations with a "whispered 'no.'" The Eucharist is the Body of Christ—but not exactly. But Melville may be closer to the mature religious stance when he recognizes the need to "Speak your 'No' with thunder." By the same token, however, mustn't faith speak its "Yes" with some sort of "thunder"? In this context, infallibility may be a muffled echo of distant thunder.

Look at it this way. Religious utterance, positive or negative, is essentially "dense" or "thunderous" in that it is commensurate with the density of individual existence. Characteristically, Sartre's atheism sees existence as "too much," a nauseating overflow; saints see existence as

OXFORD & INDIANA

Ministry Education Opportunities

1) Oxford University Theological Summer School (August 6 – 12, 1995)

2) Graduate Theological Foundation Summer & Fall Programs (deadlines):

- Ph.D. in Theological Studies or in Pastoral Psychology (4.1.95)
- Doctor of Ministry in Spiritual Direction or in Pastoral Counseling (8.1.95)
- Doctor of Ministry (with concentrations in): Religious Education, Ecumenics, Management Ministries, Spirituality, Pastoral Care. (8.1.95)
- Doctor of Ministry in Health Care Ministries (8.1.95)
- Master of Business Administration in Church Management (7.1.95)

3) Oxford/GTF Consociation Programs with combined short-term residencies leading to the Ph.D. or the D. Min. degree.

Short-term intensive residencies designed for active professionals.
outstanding faculty • innovative curriculum • a community of learning

INFORMATION PACKET 1-800-423-5983 or 219/935-4263
Graduate Theological Foundation, Donaldson, IN 46513-0005

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"glory." One of the strengths or scandals of Christianity is investing the historical "density" of Jesus with the trappings of mythopoetic theology. In a weak moment, Dinter says, "Postcritical belief acts on the hunch that creation is a more comprehensive reality that is not yet fully manifest." But can we find the necessary religious thunder in such a hunch?

If one writes from memories of a university chaplaincy, there will be a great temptation to struggle with the "truth" claims of religion because Truth is what is emblazoned on the university seal. (*Lux et Veritas* and all that!) From the standpoint of the scientific advance of truth, faith may be just a hunch. My own view is that the truths of religion are derivatives of a wholly different "language game" which, for brevity's sake, one might call the "game of promises."

The mother says to the frightened child, "Everything will be all right." Does the skeptic of the nursery whisper "no"? The mother is not so much describing how the world is—she knows travail—she is promising protection, offering fundamental reassurance beyond life's obvious and inevitable failures. Without that promise underlying all the dismaying facts, emotional maturity may be impossible. Religious faith and its accompanying "dogmas" exist primarily within the logic of promises. The famous "second naiveté" might be thought of like a second marriage. The romantic illusions of youth are tempered by realism, yet the second promise contains no "whispered 'no.'" Promising to be loving and true with the first or second (or however many) vows flies in the face of sober empiricism and the divorce statistics. But promises are not promises at all with a whispered "no." If you say you promise, you have fully done the deed whatever odd reservations rattle in the brain. Promises are by nature "dense" to the reality that they create.

First one believes in a promise, then one may puzzle how it could possibly be fulfilled. The fulfillment remains a mystery to simple fact and converts dogmatic "truths" into symbols, myths. But faith is beyond hunches, a trust beyond "truths." Why believe implausible promises? Faith in Jesus, given his history and story, offers a "Yes" beyond all "No's." □

TABLE MATTERS

THE HUNGRY SOUL
Eating and the Perfecting of Our Nature
Leon R. Kass, M.D.
Free Press, $24.95, 248 pp.

Mary Douglas

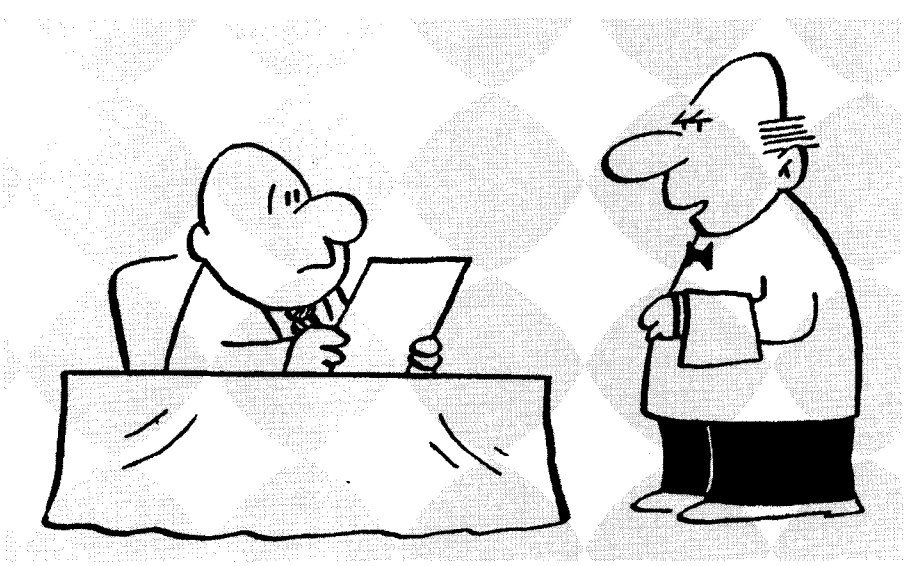
The author freely avows that this is a strange volume. The title suggests a book of devotion. Its intention is to give meaning to modern life through a sermon on nourishment. The theme is developed as for a humanist pulpit, with the undisciplined scope, weak logic, and strong emotional appeal too often evident in spiritual writing.

The initial idea is splendid, a meditation on eating. The first part sets the homely act in a grand cosmological context. As the prototypical form of incorporation and assimilation, eating is part of a continuum that starts with transformations at the level of cellular biology and ends at the dinner table. (Kass is the author of *Toward a More Natural Science: Biology and Human Affairs*.) The hopeful reader feels launched on a modern version of nineteenth-century natural theology. Instead of using nature for evidence of the existence and attributes of God, as did William Paley, Kass seems about to find testimony for human meaning by exploring the grand metaphor of consuming and being consumed.

How far will the metaphor take him? Surely he will manage to conclude with bringing physics and astronomy, mathematics too perhaps, under the single umbrella? Unless he does manage a more comprehensive synthesis than already widely on offer on the metaphor of consumption, his vaunted claim to philosophical originality is void. Alas! the big theme soon loses momentum. Banality takes over with an anthropology of human eating behavior, ritual, hospitality, table manners and all.

Then Kass turns to the Bible, where the theme of eating flourishes, but he turns to *prohibitions* on consuming certain kinds of animals. Does the author realize that he has made a U-turn, or does he think that he is still pursuing eating? It is important to keep this distinction between consuming and abstaining in mind.

First Adam and Eve were told not to eat the fruit of the tree, then Noah was



"If you don't mind my saying so, sir, the Beef Wellington may be a bit over your head."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

told not to eat blood, then we come to chapter 11 of Leviticus with the long list of forbidden animals which forms the main part of the Mosaic dietary laws. Kass treats the dietary laws in a fairly conventional way, starting with the order of creation as given in Genesis, then saying that the forbidden animals are declared unclean because they exemplify anomalies in that order, by not having the right hoofs or legs. He acknowledges the sources of this interpretation, but thinks that he is the first to glimpse the possibility that the logic of the biblical classification of animals might have "universal anthropological meaning." He has evidently not been interested in the meat prohibitions of other than biblical societies and in modern criticisms that have been brought to the reading he gives of Leviticus, by Walter Houston who recently examined anthropological writings on the classification of animals and rules about edibility, and by Jacob Milgrom in the first volume of his commentary on Leviticus in the Anchor Bible series. And more surprisingly, he is not interested in traditional Jewish criticisms of the very passages he is analyzing.

A reviewer has no reason to complain about gaps in a work of inspiration motivated by a strong desire to address our modern, moral predicament. But perhaps there may be something more to say if we can treat *The Hungry Soul* in light of eucharistic theology as seen from a biblical and so from a Jewish standpoint. I suspect that apart from not reading biblical criticism or anthropology, the author does not read Christian devotional works either. Such vast libraries are filled with theological books on nourishing and feeding, that if he had read them he would hesitate to claim originality for the thesis of the hungry soul.

The Hungry Soul's section on table manners and dining is about the secular endowment of meaning by rituals of eating. The theme of the chapter on the Bible is sanctification by curbing what may be eaten. The list of biblical animals picked out either for food or for rejection, Kass writes, gives matter for pious reflection. True enough. But isn't the contrast with Christianity well worth exploiting? Taking consecrated bread together in Communion is a privileged ritual act; honoring the Mosaic law by refraining from forbidden blood and animals is a continuous ritual act. The Eucharist is a doing, *kashroot* is a refraining from, but it is not negative. The way that *The Hungry Soul* has been arranged makes the doing, in the first place, and the not doing in the second, both sacraments of eating.

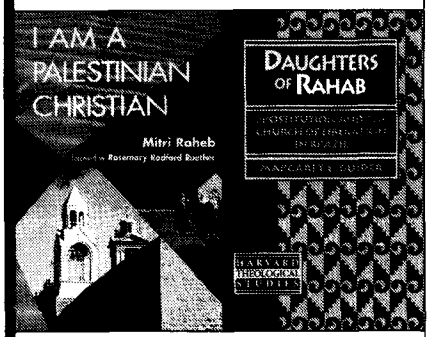
Kass goes along with the idea established for over two thousand years that the forbidden animals are not eaten because they are defiling. Usually in the anthropological record of eating customs, the animals which are not to be eaten are honored, not abhorred or despised; but in the traditional interpretation of the words used in the Bible they are rejected as "abominable." Yet God made them and Genesis says he looked at them all and found them good. So what does defiling mean?

The contrast between sacred and profane allows for danger to come from any unprepared mixing of the two. The words common, or profane, might better apply to the forbidden animals than the words defiled or unclean. The altar is consecrated, the table is consecrated, the animals which are not sacralized to the table or the altar are common, profane, and so forbidden. But why are they forbidden?

Kass notices that it is paradoxical that the nice, innocent animals get to be eaten, and the nasty, unclean ones go free. He answers by saying that being eaten is not a punishment, but just part of the whole process of living, as he explained at the beginning. But suppose that God is telling his people to be compassionate toward beings which lack the normal number of leg joints or toes, and says not to eat them because they are disadvantaged? That would be in keeping with the great chapters central to Leviticus on God's justice.

It is good to find a writer who enjoys and defends Leviticus. Kass writes well about the impurity of so-called leprosy balancing the impurity of food: the former is about what comes out of the body, the latter about what goes into it. He misses the chance of seeing the body as the model of the covenant, but his general enthusiasm is welcome as a move to reinstate the third book of the Pentateuch in popular esteem. □

CHRISTIAN SOCIAL VISIONS



MITRI RAHEB
I AM A PALESTINIAN CHRISTIAN
Foreword by Rosemary Radford Ruether
From a pastor in Bethlehem comes this powerful book that helps Western Christians understand the reality of Palestinian Christians—and helps Palestinian Christians develop a theology and social vision that is true to their situation, and helpful as a tool of mediation.
144 pp pbk $12.00 ($15.00) 1-2663

MARGARET ELETTA GUIDER
DAUGHTERS OF RAHAB
Prostitution and the Church of Liberation in Brazil
A penetrating inquiry into the Brazilian Church's increasing consciousness of prostitutes as marginalized women who are victims, not sinners. Advances the need for a critical re-visioning of the theological foundations that undergird mission and ministry.
256 pp pbk $16.00 ($20.00) 1-7093

ROBERT BENNE
THE PARADOXICAL VISION
A Public Theology for the Twenty-First Century
"The tangled connections between ultimate truths and penultimate questions of the public order are here untangled with great skill and imagination . . . a bracing proposal for thinking more clearly and acting more intelligently in the months and years ahead."
—RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS
256 pp pbk
$16.00 ($20.00)
1-2794

FORTRESS PRESS
At bookstores or from Augsburg Fortress, Publishers
426 South Fifth Street, Box 1209
Minneapolis, MN 55440-1209
Postage and handling additional
1-800-328-4648

Canadian prices in parentheses.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SAINTS ALIVE

A TREMOR OF BLISS
Contemporary Writers on the Saints
Edited by Paul Elie
Harcourt Brace & Company, $22, 325 pp.

Anna Harrison

Amazing in their variety, as the seventeen essays that editor Paul Elie has gathered together in *A Tremor of Bliss: Contemporary Writers on the Saints* illustrate, the lives of the saints express startlingly disparate ways of imitating Christ. One doesn't have to be Catholic or even religious (and a number of these authors are neither) to become charmed or inspired by saints' lives, their stark confessions and acute spiritual insights, and, sometimes, their endearingly comedic stories. The saints—the cranky, the gregarious, the sensual, the neurotic, the intellectual, the stubborn, the sweet—break into the lives of these writers, disturbing, illuminating, and provoking.

In a disarmingly confessional essay, Jesuit Avery Dulles writes about Saint Robert Bellarmine, another fiercely loyal Jesuit theologian (but not a somber one: Saint Bellarmine refused to brush flies away from his face; his nose was their Paradise). From the militant and humbler Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Ron Hansen hopes no less than to "figure out how to live magnificently." Francine Prose lingers over the life and writings of the towering Saint Teresa of Avila, who explodes conventional ideas of what it means to be female. In admiring and sheltering words, Kathleen Norris writes about the gallant girl martyrs, who, giving themselves up for slaughter during the persecutions that racked the church in the third and fourth centuries, rebelled against the constraints of family and society. In a soulful and sassy meditation, *Commonweal*'s associate editor Paul Baumann, awash in "plastic and polyester...pampers and the color pink," ponders pregnancy as transubstantiation and empathizes with Saint Joseph, patron of harried fathers, whose "consternation over his wife's seeming procreative autonomy is the consternation of everyman."

Novelist Kathryn Harrison interweaves her own story of loss and redemption with the life of Saint Catherine of Siena. In an effort to win the love of an intractable mother, a young Harrison tried desperately to harness the experience of rapture, first attained through the healing hands of a Christian Science practitioner after a bloody car accident. She needed no instruction in the lives of the saints to realize the transformative power of physical pain, twisting a vise on her fingers and pressing ice to her tongue, reveling as the blood oozed out (blood lingered in the mouth of the other Catherine when she received the host).

Harrison freed herself of her body's constraints; she abjured sleep and sought to transmute an unruly body into one that mirrored her mother's fashion-honed expectations: she stopped eating. Saint Catherine rejected ordinary food but sought expiation for all souls and found sustenance by imbibing the pus from the cancerous breast of a callous—but soon contrite—companion. Her emersion into God thrust the holy woman into affairs of the state and of the church, and into the lives of countless souls; her creative accomplishments were astonishing (she authored *The Dialogue*, one of the most important spiritual writings of the Middle Ages). There are captivating parallels in the lives of Saint Catherine and Kathryn Harrison, but the saint's discipline was saturated in dazzling theology: "it is by such suffering that we become conformed to Christ crucified," she wrote. By conforming to Christ, Saint Catherine believed she was saved and participated directly in the salvation of the world. Harrison's emaciated look produced a crop of bones, newly emerged "angles and hollows," but the bait with which she had hoped to entice her mother became her own greatest temptation: "I loved my transformed self."

Harrison's is a mesmerizing essay, raw and powerful. She raises important questions about what may motivate the appetite for renunciation: Saint Catherine "ate" and "savored" the souls of her sisters and brothers; "this after all, was our gentle Savior's food." "In no other food," she divulged, was she "ever to find pleasure." But Harrison mistakes her patron's zest for extravagant self-abasement with a rejection of life, and it is not clear if she recognizes the enormous differences between her own willful feats of endurance and the saint's *imitatio Christi*. Harrison's fashion-conscious mother marveled at Saint Catherine's dietary propriety: "she lived for years on one lettuce leaf!"

Enrique Fernandez writes a rip-roaring, thigh-slapping, soul-searching, and spirit-rousing essay, featuring Saint Lazarus and the author, who, having traveled to Cuba to report on the daily lives of the citizens of his mother country, became a skeptical but eager supplicant to the patron of the crippled and the feet impaired, hoping that this holy amalgam of Christian saint and Yoruban deity might cure his "foot dyslexia." Years of inflicting "toe crushing" pain on others had leached Fernandez of his confidence, wreaked havoc in his professional life, and spawned potentially dire consequences (Fernandez is a Latin music journalist who frequents salsa clubs, where being "deft, smooth, sharp, suave," is *de rigueur*). Joining a procession of "walkers," "genuflectors," and slitherers, the doubting but determined dyslexic journeyed several miles outside Havana to the rural shrine of Saint Lazarus to voice his particular plea: "Saint Lazarus, Babalu-Aye, please help me walk straight without tripping, stumbling, twisting my ankle, stepping on feet, or splashing in puddles." Tossed into the prayerful crowd was a pious penitent clearing the way by brushing the path for "the crawler," who announced that he wanted to feel the pebbles, the pain. "The other man kept brushing until the crawler stopped, looked up again, and said, 'If you don't stop, I'm going to stand up and fuck you up."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

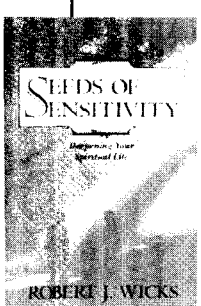
Among the teeming crowd, Fernandez saw an able-bodied man crawling on blood-ied knees, his small, naked, club-footed boy saddled on his back. Back in New York and several puddle splashes later, Fernandez realized to whom and for whom he should have offered his prayers: "That was Saint Lazarus." Fernandez delivers a perfect balance of solemnity and levity, so familiar from the lives of the saints.

Saint Jean de Brebeuf has frequently been dismissed as barbaric or embraced with pernicious sentimentality. In one of the best essays in this collection, Tobias Wolff does neither. In 1629, Saint Jean, a young aristocrat from Normandy, landed in what is now Quebec. He was a missionary to the Hurons, a people for whose rituals and beliefs, healers and feasts, he had an unfettered disdain. Yet Saint Jean weathered famine and disease, violent winters and lonely solitude, and offered his life for the Hurons. He had tried fervently to convert them to his faith: he squirreled food away, doling it out to the deserving; he hectored, cajoled, and ridiculed. Wolff is both chastened and appalled by Saint Jean, a man "of unbending principle" whose faith in his God was unwavering and ferocious and whose missionary zeal is testimony to the terror of brilliant certainty. A quarter century after Saint Jean arrived to preach among the Huron, their population was decimated; the saint's apostolic fervor had helped to ensure the annihilation of the lives and the culture of the people whose souls he had come to save. And yet, "everything he did, he did with the best of intentions." As Wolff points out, there is much to admire about Saint Jean. The martyr is seductive and attractive, particularly perhaps for those who fear that under the cloak of multiculturalism, moral relativity and a feebleness of will threaten to triumph. "If all things are true, then what particular thing is worth living for, let alone dying for?" Wolff asks. "I know I am not alone," he writes, "in my disgust with the flaccidity of spirit that comes upon us as the consequence of trying always to accommodate the justice in each claim on our sympathy and understanding." But, Wolff cautions, "I believe that this disgust is the greatest spiritual problem of our time." This is a timely and necessary essay.

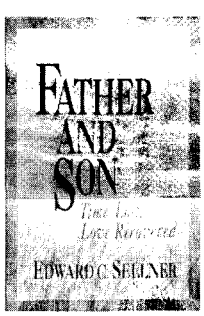
These essays are liberally peppered with delightful and disturbing anecdotes, but there are disappointments. Striving for candor, David Plante's essay on Saint John of the Cross reeks of vainglory; straining for profundity, it is tedious and banal. Hansen recoils in disapproval from Ignatius's penchant for penitential asceticism, and few of these essayists appreciate the way in which so many of the saints chose suffering not in order to punish their bodies, but because to do so was to merge with the body of their Savior, whose suffering saved. And there is the occasional infusion of a patronizing tone, a chiding inflection, as if the saint should have known better, as we moderns do (in Bruce Bawer's essay on Saint Francis, for example).

Still, *A Tremor of Bliss* is enormous fun and instructive, too. It is an unmuffled proclamation that the hold of the holy dead is tenacious: they continue to tease the imagination, inflame the passions, and provoke the conscience of women and men; they elicit anger and praise; they perplex and disgust and enthrall. □

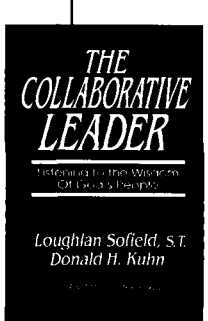
SPRING 1995



SEEDS OF SENSITIVITY
Robert J. Wicks
Rooted in the richness of our spiritual tradition, replete with helpful psychological strategies, and permeated by the author's warmth and humor. A guiding light to those seeking a deeper, more sensitive spiritual life.
0-87793-541-6 **144 pages, $7.95**
February



FATHER AND SON
Edward C. Sellner
Sons question their relationship with their fathers. Fathers wonder how best to be a parent to their sons. Sellner's memoir of mourning his own father's death will help others resolve their conflicts and heal their wounded memories.
0-87793-543-2 **176 pages, $7.95**
January



THE COLLABORATIVE LEADER
Loughlan Sofield, S.T. and Donald H. Kuhn
Foreword by Dolores Leckey
Urges church leaders to listen to the wisdom of voices within their own parishes and institutions, to those often unheralded witnesses of the Christian message who daily carry the Good News into the marketplace.
0-87793-544-0 *January* **224 pages, $8.95**

Order from your local religious bookstore or from:
AVE MARIA PRESS
NOTRE DAME, INDIANA 46556
Phone: 1-800-282-1865
FAX: 1-800-282-5681
In Canada:
Order from your local bookstore or B. Broughton Co., Ltd., Toronto

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SAINTS FOR THESE LATTER DAYS

THE REFINER'S FIRE
The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644–1844
John L. Brooke
Cambridge University Press, $34.95, 421 pp.

Martin E. Marty

Diocesan and denominational yearbooks and periodicals these years bring little but bad news. Members may believe in God and behave in godly ways, but their efforts do not add up to organizational prosperity. Bishops cut staffs and close churches, and only in the suburbs near the megamalls is there good news about religious institutions.

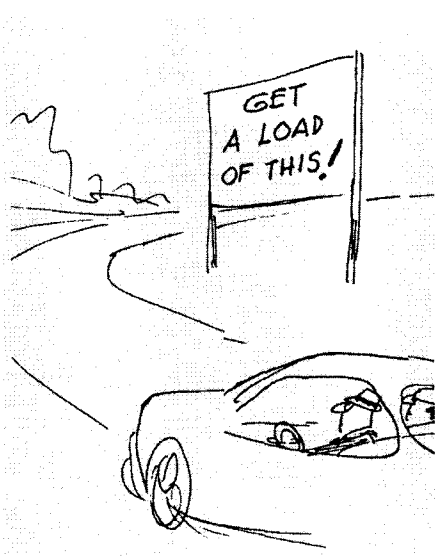
An exception makes its appearance each year when the *Church Almanac* of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints thuds through the mail slot and then weighs down the desk. It is loaded with statistics of growth in numbers and donations, burdened with pictures of temples and enhanced by lists of addresses. On page 410 this year there is a record of "Progress during Administrations of the Presidents," beginning with Joseph Smith, during whose presidency 280 members were attracted. This number grew to 8,688,511 by May of last year; 4,734,000 of these are in North America.

While non-Mormons think of these Saints as being segregated in the Great Basin Ghetto surrounding Utah, they are to be found most anywhere and they will keep making more Saints everywhere. It becomes increasingly urgent for the people they call Gentiles to understand them.

Understanding is a task never made easy, thanks to the esotericism of Mormon teachings and life. Was founder Joseph Smith a prophet of God, as the orthodox Saints believe, or a charlatan, as his and their critics often do? Are there other ways to look at him and the restoration movement which he fostered? Jan Shipps's *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (University of Illinois) is the book I have usually handed the curious. Now in my other outreached hand will be a pathbreaking volume, *The Refiner's Fire* by John L. Brooke. He takes more time, uses more pages, delves more deeply, and offers more detail than did Shipps. His book is a model of the historian's enterprise.

Brooke, like Shipps, does not position himself in either the "Smith the Prophet" or "Smith the Charlatan" camp. A non-Mormon and not a Mormon-basher, he has nothing to slake but the thirst born of his own curiosity and nothing at stake except an historian's integrity. Often one wishes he would utter a "Hey! this Smith is really nutty!" or a "Move over, Elijah!" kind of signal or clue. Instead he blends the passion of the detective and the dispassion of the good judge as he describes the background and context of Mormonism.

Not many years ago Protestant-Catholic-Jewish America was served by (good enough) historians who tended to tell stories of staid and strait religions, the flow of forces into "mainstreams" and "establishments," the balancing of upsetting spiritual agencies into tried, true, and often dull movements and institutions. The trend these days is to move behind the façades and edifices, to look at slipstreams and sidestreams until one relativizes the mainstream concept, and discovers a different America than the one that had looked familiar.



This America is a place where people in the past smuggled in their gods in plain brown wrappers, kept household idols under the table, believed in everything a little bit and tried almost everything more than a little bit. They believed in the uncanny, the supernatural, the impinging of angelic messengers on their ordinary lives. They improvised new religiosities right under the noses of the orthodox clergy and violated the proprieties of middle-class pieties while going through the motions of being ordinary. In other words, they were like the Americans of 1995.

Brooke's devisers of Mormon cosmology had two sets of raw material at hand as they invented. (Remember: "invent" can mean "find" or "make up.") In a marvel of research and compression he tells the story of medieval and then Reformation-era alchemy, hermeticism, and magic, as Catholics and Protestants alike watched spiritual power flow "between invisible and visible worlds." Via the radical English Reformation sects and innumerable New Englandish underground or parachurch experiments, seekers helped create a spiritual envelope in New York State in the 1820s, the time of the rise of Joseph Smith.

Smith also was surrounded by and often contributed to contemporary efforts to nurture or tap into the flow "between invisible and visible worlds." In Brooke's terms, he lived in the tension or with the paradox of "purity and danger" that came with hermetic traditions. He and his neighbors dug for buried treasure all over New York and thereabouts. They played or worked with seer stones, went divining, and some of them became expert at counterfeiting. In that wondrous environment Smith was visited by divine personages, received golden plates of revelation and seer stones to interpret them, found companies of fellow conspirers ("breathers-together"), founded a church, led it west, took unto himself

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wives, and was martyred in Illinois.

By the time his successors, under Brigham Young, took the Latter-day Saints to Utah, the "Mormon cosmology" of the subtitle was quite well developed, though it has always been open to more development. Many of Brooke's pages are devoted to the influence of local Masonic rites on the Mormon founders. That they were thus dependent is a familiar story, but here it is patiently detailed.

Whoever is a part of the Mormon people finds the whole story to be plausible. If "cognitive minorities" prosper, here is evidence of the most prosperous such minority among us. Latter-day Saints see everything religious and cosmological in distinctive ways, unshared by their neighbors—and then plop themselves down inside the moderate and conservative forces of American society where they seem perfectly, perfectly at home: in the best of two worlds. Whoever is an eighth of an inch beyond Mormondom may see this instead as a story of self-delusion, other-delusion, folly, and even chicanery.

To Brooke's credit, he provides good reason for the Saints to take a fresh and critical look at their roots and branches. And he invites Gentiles to understand their neighbors better while they suspend disbelief and look in on people who live "between purity and danger." They may see some elements of self-portraiture in the Saints, who exaggerate some features of American religious life and mirror others. □

REVIEWERS

DENNIS M. DOYLE, *who teaches ecclesiology at the University of Dayton, is the author of* The Church Emerging from Vatican II *(Twenty-Third Publications).*

DENNIS O'BRIEN, *a frequent* Commonweal *contributor, is the author of* God and the New Haven Railway *(Beacon).*

MARY DOUGLAS *has taught at Northwestern and Princeton. Her most recent book is* In the Wilderness: The Doctrine of Defilement in the Book of Numbers *(Sheffield Academic Press). She is currently writing a book on Leviticus.*

ANNA HARRISON'*s "365 Saints Calendar"(Workman) will be published in August.*

MARTIN E. MARTY *teaches the history of American religion at The University of Chicago.*

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

liturgists may need to stress more than they often do the transformative newness that sacramental consecration effects.

Finally, may I suggest that the actual practice of the revised rite has itself inadvertently abetted a Christological reductionism. I refer to the present placement of the exchange of peace. The "logic" of the eucharistic sacrifice, culminating in our reception of and constitution as church by the other who is the risen Jesus Christ, is currently obscured by inserting a horizontal exchange that in fact diverts attention from his real presence *on* the altar. For unless our necessary but perishable gifts of bread and wine have been truly transformed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, then our assembling and our faith are, ultimately, in vain.

With many others, therefore, I advocate a repositioning of the exchange of peace after the "Prayers of the Faithful" and before the "Presentation of the Gifts." This will better conform to eucharistic logic and to the command of the Lord that we be at peace before offering our gifts at the altar. To propose this is not to conspire in the "resacralizing restoration" that Mitchell fears, but to allow the Christological heart of Eucharist to receive a more adequate ritual expression.

(REV.) ROBERT P. IMBELLI

The author replies:

I am grateful for Robert Imbelli's incisive letter. Two items, especially, need further comment:

(1) *Christology/Ecclesiology in Eucharist*: In spite of Imbelli's fears of a "new one-sidedness," the recovery of the ecclesiological component of eucharistic faith and theology does not require that we sacrifice the "vertical" for the sake of the "horizontal." Here, Christology and ecclesiology are complementary—not competitive—coordinates. Christology must be understood "ecclesiologically," and ecclesiology must be understood "Christologically." Sacraments, after all, are actions of the church, not the mystical intuitions of individuals.

This is a both/and (not an either/or) position, and it is very traditional. Augustine gave it classic expression: "If you want to understand the body of Christ, listen to what the Apostle Paul says to the faithful: 'You are Christ's own body, his members'; thus, it is your own mystery which is placed on the Lord's table. It is your own mystery that you received....For at Communion the priest says 'The body of Christ,' and you reply 'Amen.' When you say 'Amen,' you are saying yes to what you are" [Sermon 272]. For Augustine, Christ's body is *both* on the the table *and* at it.

Thus too Aquinas argued in the *Summa Theologiae* [IIIa.80.4.corpus] that the *res* (the ultimate reality, content, meaning) of the Eucharist is twofold: It embraces both (1) the substantial reality of Christ's presence in the sacramental species, and (2) the reality of that "mystical body of Christ, which is the communion of saints" ["*corpus Christi mysticum, quod est societas sanctorum*"]. For Aquinas, it was impossible to discuss Christ's eucharistic presence without discussing the ecclesial

JUST DO IT!

Is this the year you will find out what Eastern Christianity is all about?

Summer Intensive Program in Eastern Christian Theology and Spirituality at Mt. Tabor Monastery in the mountanins of Northern California June 17-July 15, 1995.

Programs in Ottawa: 90 credit B.Th. (Eastern Christian Studies), 30 credit Certificate in Eastern Christian Studies. Graduate programs in preparation for future years. Sheptytsky Institute programs are open to men & women, clergy & lay.

The Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern Christian Studies is a unit of the Faculty of Theology, Saint Paul University. Also available from the Institute: books, videos, and *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies.*

Sheptytsky Institute, Dept.CW
Saint Paul University
223 Main Street
Ottawa, Ont K1S 1C4
tel(613)236-1393 ext 2332

Do Theology with the other side of your brain!!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

communion which that presence *intends*. (This was, incidentally, the theological basis for Vatican II's insistence on full, active, conscious participation as belonging essentially to the liturgical act.) As usual, Aquinas was right: The *res* of Eucharist is not singular, but twofold. Its primary purpose is not to produce a solitary "vertical" *object* for adoration, but to effect an inclusive, communal *outcome*—a people formed in faith and love by the Spirit who joins them as "one body, one spirit in Christ." I would argue that the greatest danger to eucharistic faith today flows from Christological assumptions that are divorced from ecclesial context (in both theology and praxis).

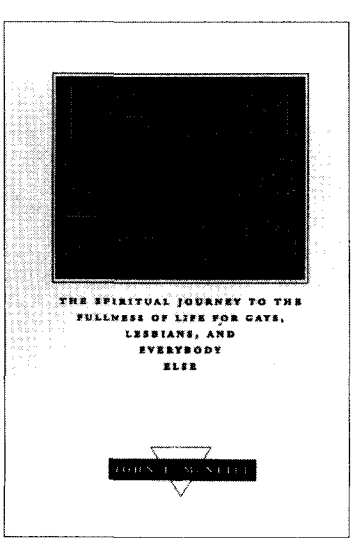
(2) "The Liturgy of the World": I find it astonishing that anyone acquainted with the "liturgy of the world" (as a theological notion) could think of it as "Rahner Lite." For the very heart of this liturgy is the cross of Jesus—an event that can hardly be dismissed as sentimentality. "The world and its history," wrote Rahner, "are the terrible and sublime liturgy, breathing of death and sacrifice, which God celebrates and causes to be celebrated in and through human history...in such a way that the liturgy which the Son has brought to its absolute fullness on his cross belongs intrinsically to it, emerges from it..." [*Theological Investigations*, XIV, 169-170]. In short, the liturgy of the world forces us to deal with God's deeds in Christ in all their scandalous particularity, their raw, historical messiness. It forbids us to think of salvation as a Gnostic fantasy played out in some other (more "spiritual") world. It requires us to take world and history, nature and body seriously.

I do not doubt for a moment that faith redefines our perception and experience of nature and history. But this redefinition points to the world itself—to the human person, especially—as the privileged place where God's lively presence is first named and known. It is this whole tumultuous history of God's dealings with humankind—in Christ, in the community of faith—that provides the motive for *eucharistia* and shapes the content of the eucharistic prayer.

NATHAN MITCHELL

FREEDOM, GLORIOUS FREEDOM

The Spiritual Journey to the Fullness of Life for Gays, Lesbians, and Everybody Else



JOHN J. McNEILL

"John McNeill is a spiritual sage. When a sage speaks, people listen. *Freedom, Glorious Freedom* is the fruit of broad experience, proof of well-tempered love, as catholic as Catholic can be."—Mary E. Hunt, Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual

$24.00 hardcover

INDEPENDENT PUBLISHING SINCE 1854

25 BEACON STREET / BOSTON, MA 02108

BEACON

Too kind to JPII

Oak Park, Ill.

To the Editors: In his January 13 review of Pope John Paul II's *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Peter Steinfels approvingly says the pope intended his book for mass consumption but in an early four-page passage mentioned nine philosophers, a Polish archbishop, and four books of the Bible. On the fifth page, did he write "Gotcha!"?

This is the pope who plays the electronic media as if he owned them. If there's anything all agree on, it's his unparalleled ability to sway or at least draw crowds. So millions of TV viewers buy his book, seeking food for the soul to go with that mass appeal, and what do they get? Ludwig Wittgenstein and his ilk, along with traditional apologetics which locates our troubles largely with Descartes and (Steinfels ignores this cornerstone of the pope's complaint) the Enlightenment.

Whatever happened to truth in packaging? This book was marketed largely as a souvenir, the literary equivalent of a T-shirt bought in Denver, as Steinfels might concede as he concedes that millions will buy it who can't understand it. Who approved that marketing, those nasty Vatican types on whom we find ourselves blaming so much, lo these many years into the Wojtyla papacy?

As for the millions Steinfels says would understand the book but "spurn it" because the author is the pope, would Steinfels knock that down a bit, to, say, hundreds of thousands? If they would all raise their hands, we would have a better idea.

Finally, Steinfels scorns the fawning interviewer and his lobbed soft questions. To that I have a question: What kind of interviewer could have gotten the papal attention? Just asking. JIM BOWMAN

The reviewer replies:

I liked the pope's book, and I detect that my friend Jim Bowman is unhappy about that. Of course, I'm unhappy that he's unhappy, but otherwise I wonder what he had for breakfast. I also wonder what book, what marketing, what interviewer would satisfy him, or is it, as I suggested in my review, simply a question of what pope? Just asking. PETER STEINFELS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

'Voice' vs. Alleva

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: In his screen column for February 10, Richard Alleva tells us that he considers *The Boys of Saint Vincent* to be "the finest film of 1994." Yet in the *Village Voice* [June 7, 1994], a publication which is not generally known for its affection for Catholicism, the same movie on priest pedophilia was dubbed "programmed to offend." It would be instructive to know why Mr. Alleva thought so highly of a movie which portrays the church in such a negative light that even the likes of the *Village Voice* won't dispute the purpose of the film.

WILLIAM A. DONOHUE

The writer is president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights.

The reviewer replies:

I didn't and don't think highly "of a movie which portrays the church in such a negative light." I did and do think highly of a movie called *The Boys of Saint Vincent*, which portrays priest-pedophilia in quite a negative light indeed. Is there any other light appropriate for such a repugnant practice?

But this Canadian film isn't just an indictment of pedophilia. It is a superb portrayal of a man (to quote my July 15, 1994, review) "so encased in the armor of self-righteousness that even the embers of his humanity have been stamped out." Brother Peter Lavin has turned the orphanage he runs into "an institution that is quite plausible in its everyday functioning...and utterly rotten at its core. The structure reflects its creator."

That is why the very hallways of Saint Vincent are photographed in a spectral light, and the hymns on the soundtrack are used to spooky effect, and the crucifixes hanging from the brothers' belts seem as menacing as truncheons. Infused into these usually neutral or benevolent things is the dread that Lavin has inspired in the hearts of his charges, not the revulsion that the filmmakers may or may not feel for the Catholic church. And not only are the kids possessed by dread but so are the nonpedophile brothers, one of whom finally topples Lavin from power. When this decent person tells Lavin, "You're a sick and evil man, Peter, and a disgrace to your order," audiences feel relieved at the victory (however temporary) of good over evil. And who, in this scene, represents good? A Catholic brother. And who represents evil? A Catholic brother. Doesn't this give Mr. Donohue a sense of the film's complexity and basic fairness?

I thank Mr. Donohue for the opportunity he's given me to reiterate my admiration for this superb movie, but I must tell him that I don't give a tinker's dam for what the sleazy *Village Voice* thinks about *The Boys of Saint Vincent* or anything else.

RICHARD ALLEVA

From the editors: Despite Richard Alleva's closing comment, it's worth noting that the *Village Voice* reviewer (J. Hoberman) had more to say about the film's purpose than is suggested by the three words Mr. Donohue has selected for quotation. In the sentence that followed those words, for example, the reviewer wrote: "I've never seen a more compelling movie on the tyranny of adults and the exploitation of children or one more poised to intervene." The review closes: "*The Boys of Saint Vincent* may not be a masterpiece, but it's surely more than an experience."

CLASSIFIED

RATES: 90¢ per word; 12 words minimum. Advance payment required. Discounts and monthly billing available for repeat advertisers. For additional information call 212-732-0800 or write COMMONWEAL, 15 Dutch St., Room 502, NYC 10038-3760.

Ministry Program

Want to be a priest, Religious, lay minister (man or woman) in the Church? Seeking theological degrees, sabbaticals/renewals for clergy, religious, laity? **Mater Dei Institute**, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA 99202-1849. 1-800-633-2252, ext. 380. Financial help available.

Conference

PASTORAL LITURGY CONFERENCE June 19–22: "*See, I Am Making All Things New.*" A generation after Vatican II, some maintain the renewal is over. We think it has only begun. Come decide for yourself. Presenters include: Scott Appleby, Anscar Chupungco, Mary Collins, Mark Francis, Archbishop James Hayes, Theresa Koernke, J. Michael McMahon, Nathan Mitchell, James Moudry, Richard Moudry, J-Glenn Murray, Thomas O'Meara, Julia Upton, Catherine Vincie. **Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy**, Box 81, Notre Dame, IN 46556. 219-631-5435. Fax: 219-631-6968.

Conference

1995 Seminar on Carmelite Spirituality, June 18–23, Saint Mary's College, "Spiritual Guidance: The Carmelite Tradition." Presenters include Kevin Culligan, OCD; Margaret Dorgan, DCM; and Keith Egan. Open to laity, religious and clergy of all faiths. Cost: $345 includes registration, tuition, room and board. For brochure and information: Sister Rose Anne Schultz, C.S.C., Center for Spirituality, Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN 46556-5027. Phone, 219-284-4636.

Catholic Used Books

I sell/buy **Catholic Used Books**. Reasonable! Booklist: $1. Matthew & Co., 12030 Lake #104, Lakewood, OH 44107.

THE CHRISTIAN INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF HUMAN SEXUALITY

Offers a four-week certificate program for spiritual directors and formation personnel focused on human anatomy, physiology, psychology, pathology, and Christian spirituality in relation to human sexuality.

For more information, call (617) 562-0766, FAX (617) 562-0668, or write:

JAMES J. GILL, S.J., M.D.
c/o ST. JOHN'S SEMINARY
127 LAKE STREET
BRIGHTON, MA 02135-3898

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Poking around: The how & the why

KATHLEEN DEAN MOORE

I wish to speak a word for the unheralded art of poking around. Two things are necessary to do it right: space—both in terms of time and place—and the ability to pay willing and close attention. For the art of poking around means prying at things with the toe of your boot, turning over rocks at the edges of streams, lifting logs to search for snakes or a nest of silky deer mice, and kneeling to examine the tiny bones mixed with fur encased in a predator's scat.

Poking around is more focused than watching, yet less systematic. Those who do it measure things with the span of their hands. They look into the sun when they see a shadow pass across a field. They spit in rivers to make fish rise. They carry seeds in their socks and rocks in their pockets. They greet one another with: "What have you found?"

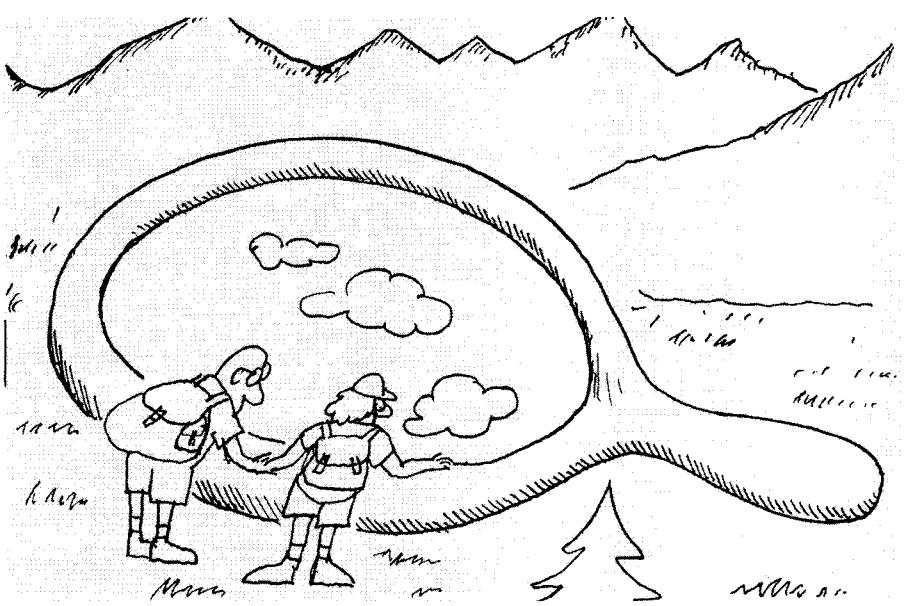
Unlike hiking, poking around has no set destination. It is more intense than strolling, but more capricious than studying. It requires less serious thought than walking, at least the kind of walking advocated by Henry David Thoreau. He insisted that you think while you walk, "like a camel, which is said to be the only beast which ruminates while walking."

Of course, there is no law against thinking while you poke around, but I find my mind doing something different. When I wander a field, my mind turns reflexively from analysis to *wonder* and *hope*.

Wonder: Knocking snow into the winter creek, I puzzle over why the clumps turn clear before they melt. Or, in spring, I find myself asking where that gopher is now, the one that last night raised a lumpy mound of earth in the pasture.

Hope: Curling up in the depression in which a deer has recently slept, I find myself hoping that the animal hasn't left ticks behind. Or, sitting on a damp log, I long for the varied thrush to sing again before my pants soak through, and for the late winter sun to drop below the oaks and begin to warm my back.

Like most pleasurable activities, poking around has its solemn enemies. Thus parents call their children slowpokes and tell them to hurry up unless they want to be left behind. In the Middle Ages, a person exploring the countryside just for the joy of it was insulted as a *poke-easy*, a lazy one.



Poking around is a guaranteed way to learn. Ideas, after all, start with sense impressions, and learning comes when we make connections among our observations. Insight is born of analogy—connections. And since truth is in the details, seekers of the truth should search for it there.

Poking around is recreation, re-creation, in the most literal sense. John Locke said that what gives each person his or her personal identity is that person's private store of recollections. If so, then people should be careful curators of the assortment of memories they collect over the years. Every time you notice something, every time something strikes you as important enough to store away in your mind, you create another piece of who you are. If someone asks, "Who are you?" it is not enough to say, "I am Kathy," or "I am a professor." The more complete answer will acknowledge that a person is partly her memories: I am a person who remembers a flock of white pelicans over Thompson Reservoir, pelicans banking in unison into the sunlight, banking into the shadow, flashing on and off like a scoreboard.

But I don't want to make too much of the instrumental value of poking around. The whole point of poking around is that it is good in itself, like music, or moonrise. So I poke around at the frozen edges of Winter Creek in late afternoon when the sun comes in low over the knoll and throws a long, rippling shadow from each dried cattail across the creek and up the farther bank. As Thoreau observed in *Walking*, the sun shall "perchance shine into our minds and hearts, and light up our whole lives with a great awakening light, as warm and serene and golden as on a bank side in autumn." □

Kathleen Dean Moore is chair of the philosophy department at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

New from Paulist Press

THE CLASSIC MIDRASH, Tannaitic Commentaries on the Bible (Classics of Western Spirituality series), translation, introduction and commentaries by Reuven Hammer. Commentary and interpretation of Scripture taken from the early rabbinic masters, the Tannaim, along with a running explanation of their theological, literary and historical importance.
Cloth $34.95
Paper $24.95

EUTHANASIA, Moral and Pastoral Perspectives, Richard M. Gula, S.S. A clear, concise overview of major arguments for and against euthanasia with a focus on the Catholic position.
Paper $5.95

EXPERIENCING JESUS, Gerald O'Collins, S.J. Reflections on Lent and Easter by one of Catholicism's most respected and admired theologians.
Paper $6.95

A FEW MINUTES BEFORE GOD, Prayers for Sundays, Feasts and Seasons, James S. Torrens, S.J. Prayerful reflections on the Sundays of the year and the changing seasons of the church.
Paper $5.95

FOR WHOM THERE IS NO ROOM, Scenes from the Refugee World, Eileen Egan. An eyewitness account of the efforts of Catholic Relief Services to assist overseas refugees from World War II to Vietnam.
Cloth $19.95

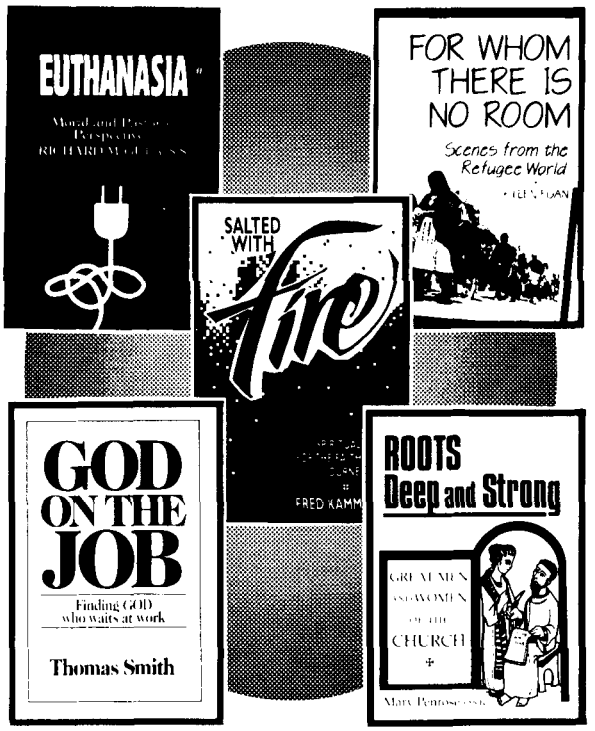
GOD ON THE JOB, Finding God Who Waits at Work, Thomas Smith. Using stories and practical applications, the author describes how meaning and faith can be found at work, even in the most "secular" or mundane of jobs.
Paper $11.95

JULIE BILLIART, Woman of Courage, Roseanne Murphy, S.N.D. de N. A biography of the Foundress of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur who, having suffered paralysis and the terrors of the French Revolution, began a movement of education for the poor women of her day.
Paper $17.95

THE MAGNIFICAT, Musicians as Biblical Interpreters, Samuel Terrien. Examines this hymn of praise in the light of recent scholarship and interprets it through selected musical excerpts from the greatest compositions of the last six centuries.
Paper $9.95

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH (Part One, Breaking Open the Catechism of the Catholic Church for Small Groups booklets), Margo A. LeBert with the International RENEW Service Team. Covers such topics as Desire for God, God's Revelation, the Public Life of Jesus, One Church with Diverse Roles and We Believe in Life Everlasting.
Paper $3.95 (t)

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION FOR MINISTRY (Integration Book), H. Newton Malony. Contemporary findings of psychology about ministry that religious professionals can apply to their day-to-day ministry in their church.
Paper $11.95



READINGS IN WESTERN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT, II. The Middle Ages through the Reformation, edited by Patrick V. Reid. An anthology of Jewish, Christian and Muslim primary texts from c. 450 C.E. through 1600 C.E.
Paper $24.95

ROOTS, DEEP AND STRONG, Great Men and Women of the Church, Mary Penrose, O.S.B. Thirty-seven concise biographies of men and women of faith in the early Church, aimed at general readers.
Paper $12.95

SALTED WITH FIRE, Spirituality for the Faithjustice Journey, Fred Kammer, S.J. A solid primer for how to survive, succeed and even flourish in the ministry of social justice and peace.
Paper $11.95

WALKING ON WATER, John Wijngaards. A faith development program that aims to deepen and enliven people's faith in Jesus and in the church as a living community. Consists of three courses, each with a video and guidebook, and a participant's book. For further information, please write our Promotion Department.

FOR CHILDREN

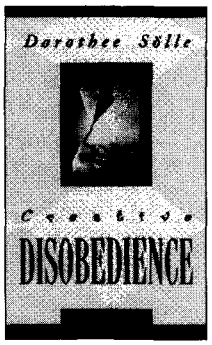
SHARING THE SUN, Lee Klein. Two boys from different cultures survive an ordeal together through their faith in God and discover how alike they really are. For children ages 6-9.
Paper $4.95

THE STORY OF ST. PATRICK, J. Janda. The life of this saint for children ages 5-8.
Paper $4.95

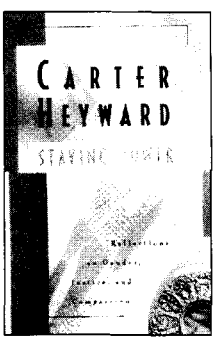
Paulist Press, 997 Macarthur Blvd., Mahwah, N.J. 07430 201-825-7300

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

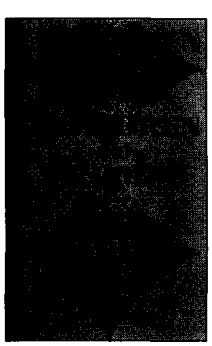
Important New Works From Pilgrim Press



Creative Disobedience
Dorothee Sölle
"May well create a generation of new readers for Sölle's work amongst those hungry for genuine spiritual truth. Any who have not previously discovered the joy and power of Germany's most theologically poetic and passionate contemporary Christian voice are in for a pleasant surprise!"
—Beverly W. Harrison
Paper—$9.95, ISBN 0-8298-1019-6

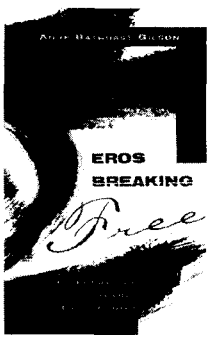


Staying Power
Reflections on Gender, Justice, and Compassion
Carter Heyward
"The themes of gender, justice, and compassion constantly overlap and enrich each other. That they are not finally divisible is one of those long-forgotten theological truths that Carter Heyward trumpets from the treetops."
—Robert McAfee Brown
"This book speaks with the same passionate concern for justice that we have come to associate with Carter Heyward's work."
—Denise Ackerman
"Carter invites us to reconnect and reimagine ourselves in the continued struggle for right relation, not only individually but even more so collectively."
—Reverend Doctor Janie Spahr
Paper—$12.95, ISBN 0-8298-1027-7

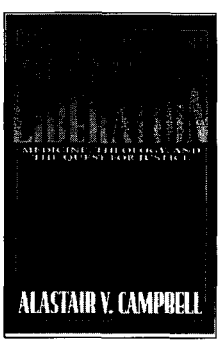


Children of the Flesh, Children of the Promise
A Rabbi Talks with Paul
Jacob Neusner
"Rabbi Neusner challenges not only St. Paul but all of those who mistakenly think that Judaism is an ethnic religion, that is to say, a religion for a specific people without any universality of concern. The Rabbi demonstrates very clearly that this assumption is incorrect. I think St. Paul would be delighted and I know Isaiah would."
—Andrew M. Greeley
Paper—$14.95, ISBN 0-8298-1026-9

The Pilgrim Press
700 Prospect Avenue East
Cleveland, OH 44115-1100
Available at your favorite bookstore.
To order directly or request a free catalog,
call 1-800-537-3394



Eros Breaking Free
Interpreting Sexual Theo-Ethics
Anne Bathurst Gilson
"Much more than simply a paean to eros, Anne Bathurst Gilson's book is an extraordinarily well researched, critical, persuasive theo-ethical argument. In facing her tough questions and embracing her concrete suggestions, churches might yet become more life-giving communities of erotic justice. This book significantly advances the sexual theology discussion, and I am grateful for it."
—James B. Nelson
Paper—$14.95, ISBN 0-8298-1021-8



Health as Liberation
Medicine, Theology, and the Quest for Justice
Alastair V. Campbell
"Alastair Campbell's *Health as Liberation* is very powerful. Taking the perspective of liberation thought and praxis, Campbell helpfully redirects our attention to health as an aspect of freedom, to the many voices of illness, and to the social structures that thwart and promote health. This clear and compelling book will be of great interest to secular as well as to theological audiences, and I enthusiastically recommend it."
—James Childress
Cloth—$12.95, ISBN 0-8298-1022-6

The Steadfast Stream
An Introduction to Jewish Social Values
Arthur J. Lelyveld
"Lelyveld argues that Judaism through the ages fosters certain concrete 'values,' by which he means attitudes and actions alike. A good, readable, and valuable book."
—Jacob Neusner
Paper—$10.95, ISBN 0-8298-1023-4

Where Two or Three Are Gathered
Liturgy and the Moral Life
Harmon L. Smith
Written for a broadly ecumenical audience, *Where Two or Three Are Gathered* explores what Harmon Smith calls the "universe of discourse" between the language of Christian worship and the language of morals. Following the customary order of the church's liturgy, Smith demonstrates how worship is meant to engender personal and social holiness, and how, for example, prayer, the eucharist, and baptism are inextricably tied to our moral understanding of such issues as capital punishment, pacifism and warfare, surrogacy, and physician-assisted suicide.
Paper—$14.95, ISBN 0-8298-1024-2

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED